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THE ANCIENT DRAVIDIANS

T. R. SESHA IYENGAR, M.A.

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THE ANCIENT DRAVIDIANS

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THE ANCIENT DRAVIDIANS

BY

T. R. SESHA IYENGAR, M.A.,

Member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland
Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, London
Asst. Professor of History, Pachaiyappa's College, Madras

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

C. RAMALINGA REDDY, M.A., (CANTAB), M.L.C.

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DEDICATED

TO THE MEMORY OF

Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, Saraswati

India's Greatest Educationist

By whose wondrous exertions, Calcutta University has become the University of Universities in India, setting, in Higher Studies, the example to her Sister Universities;

To whose many-sided genius, consecrated to the Promotion of Learning in India, India is beholden for the honoured place she has won in the World of Letters and Science;

And whose vanishing before the completion of his labours, All India deeply mourns as a Great National Calamity.

Council of Post Graduate Teaching

SENATE HOUSE

Calcutta, 23rd November, 1923

I shall be pleased to accept the dedication of your book entitled "The Ancient Dravidians," which I have found very interesting.

(Sd.) ASUTOSH MOOKERJEE

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

India is said to lack a History of her own in the accepted sense of the word. The few histories that are written by foreigners are considered by her sons as prejudiced and distorted accounts. Those written by her sons are tabooed by others as patriotic exaggerations. It is extremely difficult for an impartial student to choose between the two.

One great cause for this seemingly impossible position is the psychology of the Indian people who never cared to note down the exact second, minute, hour, day, month or year of any event. Neither did they prize so much the destruction of a kingdom, nor the annihilation of innumerable lives on the battle-field. It is true they did glory in war and rejoice in victories. But they did not blacken the name of liberty as did the democracy after the French Revolution and after the Great War in Russia.

Political revolutions were either rare or unknown in Ancient India. There was no clash of interest between classes as we observe at the present day.

Further, the rulers and the ruled always strove their best to serve humanity, to develop arts, literature, and sciences, and improve civilization. The wars in Ancient India were insignificant as compared with the wars waged for personal, glory, ambition and aggrandisement in Grece, Rome, or in the rest of Europe.

The people in India were peaceful from the time human memory and tradition tries to recapitulate, and they were religious. Even to-day the same mentality predominates and governs the people. Though these remarks are made with reference to the whole of India, they are more true in the case of South India. Kings have voluntarily abdicated their thrones in favour of their heirs, neighbouring rulers, commanders, or friends

and have betaken themselves to forests to meditate upon the problems of life after death. This much will suffice for the Indian psychology.

The Tamilians will, I am sure, welcome the history of the Ancient Dravidians by Professor T. R. Sesha Iyengar who in this little volume has carefully avoided the prejudices of a foreigner and the exaggerations of the Native.

I thank Professor Sesha Iyengar for having enabled me to publish a book shedding light upon the true history of this Ancient Tamilagam. I am glad to inform my readers that the next volume by the same author on the "Religious History of South India" will soon be published by me.

It is with the deepest regret that I have to point out the absence of a Tamil University in the heart of the Tamilagam which boasts of a highly developed civilization, rich literature, and a perfected system of philosophy. It is need-

less to say that it is the legitimate duty of a Tamil University to encourage and support erudite scholars and research workers as the present author, who alone can construct a history in the modern sense, out of the vast literature of the South. The Madras University is somewhat behind the other Universities of India in endowing chairs for research. The Madras University, I am glad to note, is now beginning to devote its attention to this kind of work as is evident from their invitation to scholars to deliver lectures on subjects such as *the Early History of the Andhra Desa*, etc. However it is respectfully suggested that the Madras University might create a separate Chair for Dravidian or Tamilian Culture.

J. N. RAMANATHAN

MADRAS,
7th Feb., 1925.

FOREWORD

This book is a valuable introduction to that important but much neglected study —Dravidian Culture and its place in Hindu Civilisation. By a fortunate coincidence I was engaged in reading Mr. Kanakasabhai's *Tamils 1800 Years Ago* and Mr. Madhaviah's rendering of *Manimekhalai*—supreme pearl of Dravidian poesy, when this book was sent to me by Mr. J. N. Ramanathan with a request that I would write a foreword. Though I fully recognise my incompetence for this task, being ignorant of Tamil, the holy language of the Dravidians, I have been persuaded by a feeling of devotion to the subject to write these few lines.

Modern Scholars are agreed that the Aryans were only one of the elements, ethnic and cultural, that have gone to compose Hindu civilisation, including that part of it in which their predomin-

ance is easily presumed, our religion; and that the Dravidians and other peoples also contributed their share to the mosaic. And again the easy equation of Aryan with Brahmin is no longer regarded as the full truth. I dare say there are yet people who think that by depreciating the Brahmin they are depreciating the Aryan and vice versa, forgetting that the great founders of the Buddhist and Jain religions were not Brahmins, and forgetting also, as Pargiter has shown, that parts of the Rig Veda and much of the Upanishads are of Kshatriya origin.

The difficulty lies in disentangling these various factors of our composite civilisation and giving them their due value. Such an analysis is bound to be largely speculative, and the least that we can expect from a historian of this subject is that he writes in the spirit of history and not of party prejudice. There are topics for dispassion-

ate investigation to meet the ends of disinterested knowledge, and the spirit of controversy should be eschewed as far as possible. To instance one point, Vedism and Upanishadic philosophy, and Buddhism and Jainism must have been current for generations along with the indigenous cults, modifying them and getting modified in turn by them, before the Siddhanta systems were formulated; and it would be difficult to explain this later synthesis without reference to the various bases from which or over which it arose.

However the analysis must not be given up as impossible. If English historians can disentangle the Saxon and other contributions to the evolution of England, Indian historians may do likewise in regard to India and the various units composing it. Scholars like Mr. Kanakasabhai and the author of this book have shown how well and truly this difficult task can be performed.

Mr. T. R. Sesha Iyengar combines literary art and scientific history in a manner that engages and sustains attention. I hope this book will be but one of a series in which the whole field of Dravidian Civilisation, in all its parts, will be explored and, presented. We Dravidians, are proud to be shown that as between Aryan and Dravidian, if there has been borrowing on the one hand, there has been giving on the other; that if we received, we also gave; that what assimilation there has been, has been mutual and not one sided; and that the Hindu Civilisation of to-day is the common heritage of both.

As an Andra I envy Tamil its possession of two such poems as *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekhalai* for which I can find no equivalents in Telugu Literature. Even in translation they dominate the soul like a charm. What must they be like in the original?

C. R. REDDY

PREFACE

The place of the Ancient Dravidians in Indian History and the solid and enduring contributions they made to Indian thought and life have failed so far to receive adequate recognition at the hands of scholars. Though it may seem presumptuous on my part to intrude into a field of research which distinguished scholars have made their own, nevertheless, I have ventured to put on record a few of the facts that I have gathered during the last ten years of study and to suggest the inquiry whether certain views have not been too hastily taken for granted with reference to the Dravidian problem. Among most writers on this subject, it has

been the fashion to give to the Indo-Aryans the credit for all that was best in ancient Indian culture. It may be admitted that the population of India is mixed beyond recognition. I am convinced that the whole complex of India's civilization—its systems of polity and philosophy, its art and institutions, and its law and religion, developed by races resulting from mixture, cannot be set down to the credit of any single constituent in the mixture. Let me take for example the much-vexed question of architecture. How were the ancient Aryans indebted to the Dravidians for their knowledge of architecture? On the one hand, numerous hymns in the Rig Veda show that the walled cities which excited the cupidity and envy of the Aryans were mostly owned by the aboriginal Asuras; and there is not quite as much said of lordly

edifices constructed by the Aryans themselves. At a later age, Vyasa in the Mahabharata acknowledges that the great palace of Yudhishtira was built by a Danava, Maya by name, who had been overcome by Arjuna in battle and an admission like this in a work apparently intended to extol the greatness of the Aryans to the skies is of considerable importance. Further, it may be conceded that the remains of Dravidian architecture existing in the south at the present day are more voluminous, more extensive, more elaborate, and more impressive than those of the Aryas in the north. The magnificent Stupa of Amravati and the marvellous rock-cut temples at Mahabalipur may have been produced in later ages under Brahmanical or Buddhist influence, but they are a natural development of strictly indigenous art. Sir John Marshall, Director-General of Archaeo-

logy in his Sir George Birdwood Memorial lecture on 'The Influence of Race on Early Indian Art' delivered before the Indian Section of the Royal Society of Arts some time last year emphasised the indebtedness of the Aryas to the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India in the domain of art. It is in the South of India in the Amravati sculptures that we find the richest, most rhythmical, and most imaginative designs. It is here again we find the wonderful decorative charm which pervades Indian art. India is indebted for her natural and inborn love of ornamental design to the Dravidian or pre-Aryan people.

In the opinion of this celebrated archæologist, the Indo-Aryans were destitute of natural artistry, and they did not know how to articulate their ideas with the chisel or the brush. But once their race had been blended with the

Dravidian, the mixed stock which resulted from the union found itself possessed of the means of putting its thoughts into visible concrete form. I hold that the Dravidians have established their titles to greatness and to fame not only in the field of architecture and sculpture but also in every other sphere of human activity. In the following pages I have endeavoured to show that the contributions of the ancient Dravidians to the totality of Indian culture do not by any means form a negligible quantity. Hypotheses of the kind proposed in this little book are I am aware viewed with suspicion and sometimes assailed with ridicule. Nevertheless I have ventured to submit my views to the candid judgment of the public, believing as I do that the existing theories on this subject have preceded, not followed, a careful and searching study of facts. I hope I have succeeded in avoiding the danger

that threatens the writer who with an elaborate pretence of research :—

"Just records
What makes his case out, quite ignores the rest,
Such an author is paid and praised for his
Untiring industry and brilliant insight ;
But there is another side to the picture :
There is plenty of 'How did you contrive to grasp
The thread which led you through this labyrinth ?
How build such solid fabric out of air ?
How on such slight foundation found this tale,
Biography or narrative ? or in other words,
How many lies did it require to make
The portly truth you here present us with ?"

It is a matter of profound gratification to me that the late lamented Sir Asutosh Mookerjee was pleased to accept the dedication of this work. It is singularly appropriate as it is a work which deals with the contributions of the ancient Dravidians to Indian culture whose promotion and advancement lay nearest to his heart. But alas ! before the work could be actually published, he

was carried off in the prime of a distinguished and glorious career to the detriment of all oriental scholarship for which he had always evinced a warm and generous sympathy.

It remains to offer my grateful thanks to the Hon'ble Mr. G. A. Natesan, B.A., Member, Council of State, Principal M. Ratnaswamy, M.A., Bar-at-Law, M.L.C., and Mr. T. Rajagopala Row, B.A., of the Madras Christian College for the kind permission they have accorded to me to embody in this book those articles of mine which appeared in their respective periodicals.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the publisher of this book Mr. J. N. Ramanathan, the worthy son of the late lamented distinguished scholar Mr. J. M. Nallaswamy Pillai, who has dedicated his life to the sacred task of spreading among the public a knowledge

of the greatness of the Dravida-desa in days gone by, and whose enterprise and enthusiasm in publishing works on ancient South Indian religion and culture, in spite of slender resources, are bound to evoke the warm and unstinted praise of all true lovers of this historic land.

T. R. SESHA IYENGAR

PACHAIYAPPA'S COLLEGE,
1st June, 1924.

THE INDO-ARYAN EPICS AND SOUTHERN INDIA

Researchers in the field of South Indian History in their laudable endeavour to reconstruct the lost early history of South India explore the pages of the two grandest Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, justly celebrated as the two unrivalled diamonds whose lustre has alone sufficed to confer imperishable and deathless glory upon the Indo-Aryan race, under the impression that a study of these works forms the starting point of all inquiry into the early history of South India. How far such an impression is justifiable, whether the epics, subjected to a thorough and searching investigation according to the accepted canons of western historical criticism, could be made to yield results valuable to the

historian of ancient South India, how far the alleged hoary antiquity of the epics can be substantiated, such are a few of the problems it will be the object of this paper to elucidate. Something will be gained, if at least the prevailing misconceptions with regard to the issues raised above—misconceptions which stand as a stumbling block to all progress and advance in the resuscitation of the lost history of this part of the country—are no longer allowed to warp the judgment of the historian.

At the outset, one is confronted and confounded with a bewildering mass of opinions and theories, respecting the ages of the composition of the epics, and the last word on the subject has not as yet been authoritatively pronounced by scholarship, Indian and European. The determination of the ages of the epics constitutes an indispensable prelude to the study of the political condition of the

peninsula as portrayed by the genius of the epic authors.

We are warranted in assuming that the epics are associated with the close of the Vedic period. The texts of the Brahmanas refer to works of an epic nature, wherein were made references to men, demi-Gods, and Gods. The name Valmiki occurs among the teachers mentioned in a Sutra work attached to the Black Yajur Veda. The patronymic of the reputed author of the Mahabharata, Vyasa Parasarya, occurs in the lists of teachers of the White Yajur Veda. The Aitareya Brahmana mentions Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit, and Bharata, the son of Dushyanta as powerful potentates. That some of the elements of the story in the Mahabharata possess a high antiquity need no further proof. F. E. Pargiter seems to hold the opinion that the Mahabharata War

should have been waged about 1000 B. C. The late lamented erudite scholar Romesh Chunder Dutt assigned the date of the War of the Mahabharata to a period between 1,400 and 1,200 B. C. Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, the distinguished Professor of Indian History and Archæology, whose devoted services to the cause of South Indian historical research have been incalculable, lends the weight of his authority to the view that the inter-tribal wars, typified in the Mahabharata, took place in the period between 1500 and 1000 B. C., while the events of the Ramayana should be placed between 1000 and 750 B.C. *

During the days of Panini, the legend of Mahabharata was current, and therefore in the opinion of Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar † of international reputation, a Mahabharata existed before Panini who flourished

* *Ancient India*, p. 3.

† *Vide* Bhandarkar's article, *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. I, p. 350.

in the 7th century B.C. In the opinion of Grierson, a Ramayana was current in India in the 8th century B.C. That many ancient fragments of the Mahabharata are encrusted in its modern form is irrefutable*. Nevertheless, it must be conceded that the texts of the epics in their present form do not in any way resemble the older texts supposed to have been in existence eight centuries before the Christian era.

The question then arises as to the age when the texts in the form in which they are available at the present day were composed, and on this subject there has been the least unanimity. Prof. Weber holds that the Mahabharata assumed its present shape centuries after the commencement of the Christian era. Dr. Buhler argues that, though it existed in the fifth century A. D., its composition should be pushed back by four to

* James Fergusson's *Tree and Serpent Worship*, p. 58.

five centuries. The author of a book entitled *Transformed Hinduism* gives it as his opinion that the Mahabharata was arranged in its present form about the third century A. D. Dion Chrysostom, who flourished in the first century of the Christian era, adduces direct evidence as to the existence of the epic. Megasthenes in his *Indika* makes no reference to the epic. It is therefore surmised by some that the origin of the epic should be sought in the interval between his time and that of Chrysostom. Mahabharata characters are referred to by Patanjali in his *Mahabhashya*, a work ascribed to the 2nd century B. C. Prof. Kielhorn observes that the epic Sanskrit and the Pali of the Jataka do not materially differ from the language employed by Patanjali. The Bisastainyopakhyana of book XIII Chap. 93 and 94 of the Mahabharata occurs in the Pali and the

Sanskrit Jataka collection with remarkable coincidences of detail, and is represented on the stupa of Bharhut which was constructed about 150 B. C. Asvaghosha who, though living in the first century A. D., drew from older sources alludes to many epic personages in his *Buddhacharita*. In the Pulumayi Inscription, which dates before 150 A.D., Krishna, Arjuna, Nahusha, and Janamejaya are mentioned. J. Kirste in his article on the Mahabharata question contributed to *the Indian Antiquary* Vol. 31 expresses the view that, when Pushyamitra killed the last of tho Maurya kings, Brihadratha, in 183 B.C., the Brahmanas re-established their ancient ascendancy, and the decline of the Buddhist religion followed. During this period, the Brahmanas collected all the legends of Vaishnavitic and Saivitic stamp into one large work, translating them, at the same time, from Prakrit

into Sanskrit. This was handed down orally till the second century A. D., and then reduced to writing. Thus, the period of the Indo-Scythians (45-225 A. D.) towards the close of their power witnessed according to this high authority the compilation of the Mahabharata epic. 'Brahmanic India, threatened by the barbarian world, gathered up the scattered treasure of her traditions and institutions, and composed their epitome in the Mahabharata and the Manava Dharmasastra, both animated by the same spirit, constructed partly from the same material, and both looking out on the same alien horizon, the Yavanas, the Pahlavas, and the Sakas.' In the opinion of Prof. Hopkins, the Mahabharata first took shape during the period 400-200 B. C.* In the Asoka edicts, the names of the Greek kings of the time of the *Diadochi* are mentioned.

* *The Puranic Histories of the Early Aryas*, J. Kennedy, *J. R. A. S.*, 1915, p. 507.

In the Mahabharata, heroes of the poem appear on terms of intimacy with certain Yavana kings. As the latter are referred to as ruling in the very localities in the North-West of India which were under the sway of the Diadochi, it can safely be asserted that the compilers of the epic knew these princes as their own contemporaries, and hence established a connection between them and their epic heroes. From the Mahabharata we learn that the Yavana king, Bhagadatta, was an old friend of Yudhishtira's father, that the Yavana king Kaserumant was slain by Krishna, that the formidable Kala-yavana shared the same fate, and that the Yavanas, the Sakas, and the Pahlavas participated in the Titanic conflict between the Kurus and the Pandavas.* These circumstances lead one to suppose that, at the time when these passages were written,

* Grierson's article on *Weber on Akalya*, *Ind. Ant.* 1888, p. 302.

collisions of the Northern Aryans with the Greeks had already happened.* It is therefore argued that the present text of the Mahabharata belongs to the period which witnessed the widespread influence of the Greeks, Indo-Scythians, and Parthians. The epic professes itself to be written down, and therefore it is contended that nothing written has been found which goes back to a time before the third century B. C. But this view of the matter has not behind it the weighty support of discerning scholars. The late lamented historian Dr. Vincent Arthur Smith considers that the middle of the 7th century B. C. was a period of progress marked by the diffusion of a knowledge of the art of writing in India.† In the opinion of Mr. Cust expressed in the *Royal Asiatic Society Journal*, Vol. 1886, the Phoeni-

* *The History of Indian Leterature*—Weber, p. 188.

† *Early History of India*, p. 27.

cian alphabet singles out the sixth century B. C. as the period when the Indian writing was first used extensively. It follows therefore that a written Mahabharata might have been in existence before the third century B. C. Prof. Wilson* maintains that the Ramayana should have been written about 300 B. C. Dr. Arthur A. Berriedale Keith says that there is no reason to go below a date before 300 B.C. for the kernel of the Ramayana, while the date before 500 B. C. cannot be maintained.† The author of the *Transformed Hinduism* holds that the Ramayana was composed about the fourth century B. C. On the other hand, Prof. Rapson asserts that, while certain portions of the two epics are very early indeed, the greater part of the Ramayana in its present form must date from 500 B. C., and the oldest

* *Vide* Prof. V. Ball's article *Ind. Ant.* 1884, p. 229.

† *The date of the Ramayana, J. R. A. S.*, 1915, p. 327.

portions of the Bharata must at least be of equal age. Dr. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar says that both the works may have to be referred to the fifth century B. C.* Such are some of the conflicting theories propounded by different scholars, every one of whom has established a claim to respectful hearing by his profound scholarship in Indian antiquities.

However, the following account of the history of the national epics of India, supported as it is by the high authority of Prof. Macdonell† seems to me to approximate more nearly to the truth than any other explanation that has so far been offered. The historical germ of the two great epics is to be traced back to a very early period, say, the tenth century B. C. Old songs about the ancient feud between the two tribes, the Kurus

* *The Beginnings of South Indian History*, p. 64.

† Macdonell's *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 285.

and the Panchalas and about the stirring martial exploits of the heroes who played a notable part in it must have been transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth, and recited in popular assemblies or at great public sacrifices. These disconnected battle songs were worked up by some poetic genius into a comparatively short epic describing the tragic end of the Kurus who were overthrown by the treacherous Pandavas. To this period is ascribed the conception of Brahma as the Supreme Deity. The Pali literature affords evidence to show that Brahma already enjoyed this unique position in Buddha's time. It may be admitted therefore that the original form of the Mahabharata epic was composed about the 5th century B.C. The next stage in the history of the epic is marked by the development of the original epic into a long poem of 20,000 slokas. In this enlarged epic

the Pandavas are praised for their virtues; Siva and Vishnu are introduced on an equal level with Brahma as Gods of the Hindu pantheon; Krishna is deified as an incarnation of Vishnu, while distinct mention is made of the Yavanas, the Sakas, and the Pahlavas. Megasthenes notes in his time the increasing prominence of the two Gods, Siva and Vishnu, and refers to the division of Hindu society into Saivites and Vaishnavites. Thus, one is irresistibly led to the conclusion that an extension of the original epic should have taken place about 300 B. C. Prof. Macdonell, in discussing the question as to the age when the Mahabharata attained to the form which it at present possesses, refers to an inscription in a land grant dated 462 A. D., or 532 A. D., which proves conclusively that the epic about 500 A. D., consisted of 100,000 slokas. Prof. Macdonell points out that further researches

might enable us to put back this date by some centuries. In his opinion it would not be far from the truth to say that the great epic had become a didactic compendium before the commencement of the Christian era. Thus there are three different stages in the growth and development of the Mahabharata epic, the first belonging to the fifth century B. C., the second stage to the third century B. C., and the third stage belonging roughly to the first century B. C. In our attempt to get a correct picture of the political condition of South India, we shall confine our attention to the oldest portion of the epic *viz.* that portion composed in the fifth century B. C.

In Ayodhya there should have been current among the court bards a number of epic tales recounting the achievements of the Ikshvaku hero, Rama. Regarding the age when the oldest part

of the Ramayana was composed, it must be remembered that the original part of the poem was completed at a time when the epic kernel of the Mahabharata had not as yet taken definite shape*. The poem of Valmiki was generally known as an old work before the Mahabharata assumed a coherent form. Prof. Macdonell points out the pre-Buddhistic origin of the original Ramayana. We receive further support from Prof. Jaçobi† whose researches have reduced the original Ramayana to a volume of moderate compass. References to foreign nations like the Yavanas, Sakas, and Pahlavas are shown to be later interpolations. Traces of Greek influence are shown to be non-existent in the original portion of the Ramayana. There is no mention of Pataliputra,

* Macdonell's *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 306.

† *Ind. Ant.* 1894, Vol. 23, p. 54, Grierson on *Indian Epic Poetry.*

though Rama was traversing the very spot where it stood in subsequent times. The society was in a patriarchal stage. Asoka's empire is not referred to at all. One is struck with the small size of the kingdoms. The original Ramayana was composed when the ancient Ayodhya had not yet been deserted, but was still the chief city of Kosala, when its new name Saketa was unknown, and before the seat of government was transferred to Sravasti. Prof. Jacobi concludes that the oldest portions of the poem were composed before the fifth century B. C., and probably in the 6th or 8th century B. C. Notwithstanding the serious objections raised to the assumption of a high antiquity to the epic by Professors Garth and Grierson, we are forced to side with Prof. Macdonell, and say that Valmiki worked up the current legends and tales into a single homogeneous production before the fifth century B. C.,

say roughly in the 6th century B. C.

The original epic of Valmiki was either recited by professional minstrels or sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument, being handed down orally in the first place by Rama's sons, Lava and Kusa. These names are considered to be pure inventions of popular etymology intended to explain the word Kusilava, bard or actor. These rhapsodists made additions in the original text to suit the tastes of the audience. The Ramayana, though it consists at present of seven books, originally consisted of five books only (II-VI). The seventh book is presumably a later addition; for the conclusion of Book VI at one time marked the close of the whole poem. Besides, several passages in the first book are found inconsistent with the statements made in the later books. Some cantos in the five genuine books are evidently interpolations. A considerable time must

have elapsed between the composition of the original poem and that of the additions; for the tribal and the human hero of the former has been transmuted in the latter into not merely a national hero but also an *Avatar* of Vishnu. Valmiki, the author of the epic, appears as contemporaneous with Rama. A long interval of time must have elapsed for such a transformation to be effected. Prof. Macdonell is therefore convinced that the additions to the original poem were made some time after 300 B. C. We may not be far wrong if we place the additions to the original poem approximately in the third century B.C.

Having made an attempt, however feeble and imperfect, to fix the ages of the composition of the two celebrated epics, it will be our task now to describe the political condition of India as revealed in the pages of these poems. If the conclusions we have arrived at are sound,

then it follows that the outlines of a picture, however dim and shadowy, may be obtained respecting the political condition of Southern India as it appeared in different times to different authors, to Valmiki in the 6th century B. C., to the compiler of the Mahabharata in the 5th century B.C., and to the author or authors of the additions made to the Ramayana in the third century B. C.

South India in the sixth century B. C.

The story of Rama brings South India definitely into view for the first time. The Tamilians, a Non-Aryan people with distinct traditions, language, history, civilization, and nationality of their own, are brought into contact with the gifted and the virile Aryans from the North. It is maintained with some warmth that the Tamilians formed an empire in the South of India and in the contiguous islands, and that prince Ravana reigned over these contem-

poraneously with Rama. Ravana's kingdom in Ceylon was flourishing and prosperous. The settlement of the Rakshasas on the lower Godavary valley called Janasthana formed part of Ravana's realm, and there must have been intercourse between Ceylon and Janasthana by sea.* Janasthana and Kishkhinda, the modern Hampi, in the Bellary District, ruled over by Vali, had both attained to a considerable degree of civilization and prosperity so early as the 6th century B. C. The three great kingdoms of the Chera, Chola, and Pandya that played a grand, illustrious, and ever memorable, but undeservedly forgotten, part in the up-building of Dravidian culture and civilization were either non-existent; or not known to the poet. The rest of South India was a veritable wilderness known as the Dandakaranya. It

* *Earliest Indian Traditional History*—F. E. Pargiter, *J. R. A. S.* 1914, p. 285.

is said that Rama on his march towards Lanka encountered no cities, no tenants of wood and cave except anchorites, monkeys, bears, vultures, imps, and demons. The Dandakaranya was infested by savages headed by monsters such as Viradha, Kabandha, Dundhubhi, Khara, Dushana, and Trisiras, all of whom acknowledged the sway of Ravana, and disturbed the rites and penances of the Aryans, swallowed all the oblations offered by them to the Gods, and also stemmed the onrush of the advancing Northern Aryans. South India consisted of dense forests inhabited by hill and savage tribes called by Valmiki Rakshas, Yakshas, and Vanaras.

South India in the fifth century B. C.

The picture of South India presented in the Mahabharata is in marked contrast with that of the Ramayana, and exhibits a later and more advanced stage in civilization. The vast areas of

wildernesses mentioned in the Ramayana have given place to large and flourishing kingdoms. There is ample reference to many South Indian kingdoms in the Mahabharata. In the Adiparva, a Pandya king is referred to as one of Draupadi's suitors. Sahadeva in his southern expedition before the celebration of the Rajasuya sacrifice is said to have conquered the Pulindas, and then marched into the Pandya country. We learn from the Sabha Parva LI of the Mahabharata that the Cholas and the Pandyas carried sandal oil in golden jars, piles of sandal and aloe wood from Malaya and Dardura (Nilgiris), gold, jewels, and fine textures. This is eloquent testimony to the industrial and commercial progress of the Tamil kingdoms. South India enjoyed direct communication with the rest of India. In the Sabha Parva, the kings of Kalinga, of the Andhras, and the Dravidas are men-

tioned. The kingdom of Vidarbha had already become conspicuous among the nations of India for the splendour and magnificence of its court and other marks of progress. Agastya, the pioneer of Aryan colonisation into the south, is said to have married a Vidarbha princess, known as Lopamudra. Damayanti's Svayamvara will give one an adequate idea of the grandeur and the glory which Vidarbha had reached in those early times.

South India in the third century B. C., as seen from the pages of the enlarged Ramayana.

There is not much difference between the description of South India in the 3rd century B. C. and that of South India in the 5th century B. C., the only difference being that the South Indian kingdoms and people are here given a more detailed notice than in the earlier work. The epic speaks of the Deccan

quite as familiarly as of the rest of India, and asserts that it was governed by kings and organised into nations. We learn from Sugriva's geographical instructions to the monkey chiefs the names of various kingdoms in the South. Allusions are made to the kingdoms of Vidarbha, Rishika, Mahishaka, Kalinga, Kasika, Andhra, Pundra, Chola, Pandya, and Kerala. The capital of the Pandya kingdom is Kavatam, the golden beautiful city adorned with jewels and worthy of the Pandyas. Mention is made of Musiri, a great emporium of the Chera kingdom. Svetharanyam near Puhar in the Chola territory is referred to as the place where Anthaka lost his life at the hands of Siva. The four cantos in Book IV of the original Ramayana, which describe Sugriva's instructions to the monkey chiefs, represent Dandakaranya as occupying only a limited portion of South India, and make copious allusions

to the flourishing kingdoms of South India, are here taken to be interpolations belonging to an epoch later than the 6th century B. C., and there seems to be a general consensus of opinion in favour of this view. But some scholars contend that these four cantos formed portions of the original Ramayana itself, that Dandakaranya even in the sixth century B. C., did not extend over the whole of South India; and that therefore the existence of Dandakaranya was quite compatible with that of large kingdoms. Hence they conclude that these portions are not interpolations at all. Mr. Thomas Foulkes writes in *the Indian Antiquary* Vol. 8, " Notwithstanding the poetical mould in which Valmiki has cast his conception of the state of the Deccan for the special purposes of his poem, he also had clearly before his mind a more real prosaic picture of its condition which was ready to be produced

when the practical side of his events required it to be done. He has shown as distinctly that, at the very time when Rama was wandering in exile through the wilds of the Dandakaranya, the Deccan, in which that aranya was situated, was occupied by the Vidarbhas and other nations to all of whom emissaries were sent to search for the lost Sita. Moreover the collocation of the Dandakaranya with the 41st Chap. of Book IV of the Ramayana shows that Valmiki regarded it as occupying a limited portion of the Deccan in the midst of these nations, but yet quite distinct from them. Dandakaranya is not spoken of as extending over the whole of the Deccan. Its existence was quite compatible with the contemporaneous existence of several strong kingdoms and of much civilization in the regions around it." Such a view implies the admission of a very high antiquity to the South Indian king-

doms. We shall only content ourselves with remarking that researches, that have been made so far, do not enable us to support the opinion of Mr. Thomas Foulkes.

Thus, we have succeeded in getting a bare outline regarding the political condition of Southern India in different periods *viz.*, 6th century B. C., 5th century B. C., and the 3rd century B. C. This division, though apparently arbitrary, has been made after an exhaustive study of the whole literature on the subject. After all, the picture is extremely vague, and is not productive of much benefit to the student of the ancient history of the South. Much will be gained if the prevalent faith in the high historical value of the epics for purposes of the ancient history of the peninsula receives a rude shock. The periods which are depicted in the epics are more modern than the student

of ancient South Indian history hopes to find, and therefore the impression that is left upon the reader's mind after a critical study of the two great epics of the Indo-Aryan race is that the future historian of ancient South India will do well to seek for his material in the numismatic, epigraphic, literary, linguistic, traditional and archæological records of the Dravidian people rather than in the epics of Aryan India.

AN UNWRITTEN CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT SOUTH INDIA

In this paper it is proposed to describe in brief outline the glories of the Ancient Dravidians who played a not unimportant part in shaping and moulding the history of South India in far-away ancient times. The object of the writer in offering this humble contribution is to set before the reader a truer conception of the place of the Dravidians in South Indian history, their distinctive culture, their solid and lasting contributions to the development of Indian thought and life, and the profound and far-reaching influence they exercised upon some of the great nations of antiquity, while in turn they were roused out of their dreamy, lethargic, and isolated existence to participate in the rich heritage which the dying West-Asiatic world bequeathed to Dravidian India. Though the writer

is conscious that the attitude here taken is diametrically opposed to the long-cherished theories and deep-rooted convictions of savants, he nevertheless ventures to put forth his views for what they may be worth, in the hope that at least the first step may be taken in the overthrow of Aryan bigotry and pride and in the recognition of the rich heritage brought by Dravidian forefathers to enrich the culture of Aryan India. That the Dravidian race possessed a genius and an individuality of its own, that it made great contributions to the development of the Indo-Aryan race in different spheres of human activity, and that it was out of the harmonious commingling of the cultures of the Dravidian and the Indo-Aryan that the Hindu civilization of the present day has been evolved, these truths, it is hoped, will soon pass out of the stages of ridicule and of indifference, and in the fulness of time

receive adequate recognition at the hands of discerning scholars.

The Ancient Dravidians were the direct ancestors of the Tamils, Malayalees, Telugus, Canarese, and other tribes now occupying the greater part of Southern India. These had planted their settlements throughout both Northern and Southern India in ancient times. The fact that several Dravidian dialects, such as Brahui, Villi, and Santal, are found stranded in the midst of other tongues in Baluchistan, Rajputana, and Central India testifies to the once universal diffusion of the Dravidians in India. But as the centre of gravity of the Dravidian peoples, as determined by the density of their population, lies somewhere about Mysore, South India must be considered as the home of those peoples whence they might have spread to the north*.

* *Vide* Govindacharya Svamin's article in *Ind. Ant.* 1912, p. 228.

The following is the account gathered from Indian traditions as regards the origin of these Dravidians :— *Among the Dasyu tribes, which according to the Aitareya-brahmana were descended from the Rishi Visvamitra, are mentioned the Andhras. Manu specifies the Dravidas as among the tribes which had once been Kshatriyas, but had sunk into the condition of Vrishalas (Sudras) from the extinction of sacred rites and the absence of Brahmans. In like manner the Cholas and Keralas are stated in the Harivamsa to have once been Kshatriyas, but to have been deprived of their social and religious position by king Sagara. In the same way, it appears that several Puranas, the Vayu, the Matsya, Agni, Brahma, claim an Aryan descent for the southern races by making their progenitors or eponyms Pandya, Karnata, Chola, Kerala to be descend-

* Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, Vol. II, Sec. 5, p. 422.

ants of Dushyanta, the adopted son of Turvasu, a prince of the Lunar line of the Kshatriyas. Turvasu, the Puranas say, was appointed by his father to rule over the south-east. Thus the Harivamsa relates, 'Yayati, son of Nahusha, having conquered the earth with its seven continents and oceans, divided it into five portions for his sons. This wise king placed Turvasu over the south-east region. According to the legend, Turvasu, in common with most others of Yayati's sons, had declined to accede to his father's request that he should exchange his condition of youthful vigour for his father's decrepitude, and was in consequence cursed by the old man.' The Mahabharata I, 3478 gives the following particulars of the curse :—'Since thou, though born from within me, does not give me up thy youth, therefore thy offspring shall be cut off. Thou fool shalt be king over those degraded

men who live like the mixed castes, who marry in the inverse order of the classes, and who eat flesh. Thou shalt rule over those wicked Mlechchas who commit adultery with their preceptors' wives, perpetrate nameless offences, and follow the practices of brutes. The Andhras, Dravidas, Cholas, and Keralas, who have been mentioned in the foregoing pages as degraded Kshatriyas or as descendants of the adopted son of Turvasu, were the inhabitants of Telingana, of the Central and Southern parts of the Coromandel coast or the Tamil country, and of Malabar respectively'. It is evident that the legendary notices referred to above do not throw any light on their origin. It will be shown in the following pages that the languages spoken by these peoples are distinct in stock from the languages of the Aryas. If the Dravidian languages be of a stock altogether distinct from Sanskrit, it follows at least

as a *prima facie* inference that the races, which originally spoke these two classes of languages, must also have been distinct from one another in their descent, and could not have belonged to the same branch of the human family.

The Languages of South India:

Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Canarese (*i.e.*) the Dravidian languages are all fundamentally different from Sanskrit, the language of the Aryans. These languages, while they have a common origin and a close affinity to each other, are different from Sanskrit and its derivatives. The northern pandits classify the vernacular dialects of India into two sets of five, the five Gauras and the five Dravidas consisting of the Maratha, Gurjara, Telinga, Karnataka, and Dravida. Of the latter, the first two belong to the northern group; while the last three are not, as the Northern pandits suppose, derived from Sanskrit

like the northern dialects, but, as regards their original and fundamental portion, are quite independent of Sanskrit. The difference between the northern and southern dialects lies in this, that, though the northern ones contain a small proportion of non-Sanskrit words, they are mainly composed of words derived from Sanskrit, while the Tamil, Telugu, and other southern languages, though they contain a certain proportion of Sanskrit words, are, as regards the great bulk of their vocabulary, genius, and spirit, distinct from Sanskrit, the classical speech of the Aryas.* No person, who is well versed in comparative philology and who has compared the primitive and essential words and the grammatical structure of the Dravidian languages with those of Sanskrit, can imagine for a moment that the former

* *Vide* Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, Part II; Caldwell's *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages*, p. 42.

have been derived from the latter by any process of development or corruption. *Sanskrit may contribute to the polish of the South Indian languages, but is not necessary for their existence. The non-Sanskrit portion of the Dravidian languages exceeds the Sanskrit portion. Pronouns and numerals of the Dravidian languages, their mode of inflicting verbs and nouns, the syntactic arrangement of their words—all things which constitute the essential structure of a language are essentially different from those of Sanskrit. The base of Tamil, the most highly cultivated as regards its original structure of all the Dravidian languages, has an independent origin.† ‡In its more primitive words, such as the names of natural objects, the verbs expressive

* *A Grammar of the Teloogoo Language* by A. D. Campbell, p. 2.

† Wilson's *Catalogue of the Mackenzie Collection*, p. 19.

‡. Remarks of Babington and F. W. Ellis quoted in Wilson's *Mss.*, p. 18.

of physical action or passion, and the numerals, it is unconnected with Sanskrit. The Tamil language retains an alphabet which tradition affirms to have heretofore consisted of but sixteen letters, and which has several letters of peculiar powers. Tamil is not dependent on Sanskrit for the full expression of thought. The ancient or classical dialect of this language, the Sen Tamil, is almost entirely free from Sanskrit words and idioms. The finest works in Tamil, such as *the Kural*, are original in design and execution, and also independent of Sanskrit. According to Dr. Burnell, the science of grammar (vyakarna) was cultivated in the south from a very early period, not as derived from Sanskrit, but as communicated from a divine source, in other words, as being of indigenous origin. Prof. Julien Vinson says, "Tamil and Sanskrit in spite of some analogies of words have no

connection whatever. Their grammatical systems so widely differ that they certainly proceed from quite different origins. They are only to one another what a cocoa tree would be to a carrot plant."* It is thus clear that the Dravidian languages belong to a stock distinct from Sanskrit. Many Sanskrit words connected with the arts of peace were borrowed from the Dravidian. It is not surprising therefore that Sanskrit was profoundly affected when it spread among the peoples of Ancient India, that it shed some of its vowels, Indo-Germanic *a*, *e*, *o*, all being levelled down to one uniform *a*, that it developed new consonants (*e.g.*) the sibilants *s*, *s'*, *sh* hopelessly confused in the pronunciation of Sanskrit in various parts of India, and that its grammar was slowly but surely modified.† The

* *The Siddhanta Dipika*, Vol. 5, p. 31.

† *Vide Age of the Mantras* by Mr. P. T. Sreenivasa Aiyangar.

Dravidian dialects affected profoundly the sounds, the structure, the idiom, and the vocabulary of Sanskrit. The differences between the vedic language and its hypothetic parent, Indo-Germanic, are due to the influence of the Dravidian dialects of India. In the course of its development in India on account of the constant influence of the Dravidian tongues, Sanskrit lost the subjunctive mood, many infinitive forms, and several noun-declensions, forgot its richly varied system of real verb tenses, and adopted turns of expression peculiar to the Dravidian idiom. Mr. M. Collins has shown the existence of a Dravidic substratum in the languages of North India. The Dravidian element makes its influence felt in the sounds employed not only in the Sanskritic vernaculars but to a certain extent in Sanskrit itself. The cerebral stops, so characteristic of Dravidian, are found even in the earliest

Sanskrit.* †Dr. Gundert has pointed out the not inconsiderable number of Dravidian roots adopted into Sanskrit, a fact persistently ignored by northern pandits. It was proved years ago by Dr. Taylor that a Tamiloid language, now represented by its most cultivated branch in the South, constituted the original staple of all the languages of India. The existence of a Tamilian substratum in all the modern dialects of India and of the profound influence, which the classical Tamil has exercised on the formation and development of both the vedic and the classical Sanskrit, is gradually coming to be recognised by students of Indian philology‡. Prof. Rhys Davids in his *Buddhist India* commenting on the evolution of the Aryan lan-

* *Dravidic Studies*—S. Anavaratavinayakam Pillai, No. III, p. 56.

† W. Elliot's *Coins of Southern India*, p. 2.

‡ *Origin of the word Arya*—Tamby Pillai, *Tamilian Antiquary*, Vol. II, No. 2.

guages of India maintains that the Vedic Sanskrit is largely mixed up with the primitive Dravidian*. Dr. Maclean holds that there is little doubt that the Dravidian languages are comparatively older in point of time than Sanskrit.† It is evident from the foregoing account that the Dravidian-speaking races were different from the Aryas, that they were sufficiently advanced to develop languages of their own, and civilized and numerous enough to absorb completely the numerically inferior Aryan foreigners, and enrich their speech with words relating to their professions which were in a high state of perfection among themselves.

Dravidian genius was conspicuous not merely in the sphere of language, but also in that of literature. Of all the races of India, the only people who

* *Buddhist India*, p. 156.

† *The Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency*, pp. 42 and 112-3.

had a poetical literature independent of Sanskrit are the Tamils, a typical Dravidian people. *The metres and rules of versification of Tamil poetry are different from those of Sanskrit. Tamil has preserved to this day its ancient metres of Ahaval, Venba, Kalippa, and Vanjippa. The Arya, Vaitaty, Anushtub, Gayatri, and other ordinary Sanskrit metres have not their corresponding equivalents in Tamil. The ancient Tamil versification, purely Dravidian, and its genius distinct from that of Sanskrit, and the possession of numerous, varied, and polished forms of verse independent of Sanskrit models lead one to conclude that the Tamil language had a literature of its own before its contact with Sanskrit. Without a poetic literature, metres and rules of versification are meaningless. Even before the time of Agastya (Circa 8th century B.C.), the pioneer of Aryan

*The Tamilian Antiquary, No. 5, p. 7.

colonisation in the south, there was a distinctive Tamilian literature as may be gathered from the evidence furnished by the language itself. The Grammar *Tolkappiyam* is a masterpiece, and could have been composed only when the language had reached its pristine maturity. References in *Tolkappiyam* (Circa fourth century B. C.,) show that there existed a certain amount of literature in Tamil before its composition. For we see that most of the rules are concluded in the work by such phrases as ' they say,' 'the learned thus say', 'the Grammarians say so.'* The literature of the Tamils is unique in the east.† It is the outcome of the genius of the people themselves. It is a mirror which reflects the civilization and institutions of the ancient Dravidians. *Tolkappiyam* itself is the most ancient composition extant in Tamil

* (*e.g.*,) *vide* Sutras 23, 40 and 47, Vol. 1, Part 1, *Tolkappiyam*, Porulathikaram.

† *On the Study of Vernaculars* by Dr. G. U. Pope, *J. R. A. S.*, Vol. 17, p. 165.

literature, said to have been written by Tolkappiyar otherwise known as Tiranadumagni. Among the sources which throw light upon the condition, political and social, of the Tamil people in ancient times, *Tolkappiyam* will easily hold an important place. It is regrettable that considerable neglect should have fallen upon the great mass of early Dravidian, especially Tamil, literature. Overborne by Aryan legend, relegated to the limbo of oblivion by Indian scholars who attached greater importance to Sanskrit, the language of the Aryan settlers of India, and its merits being kept too much in the shade owing to the preference of European scholars for the study of Sanskrit, it has not had a chance of obtaining the notice it so richly deserves. To raise this book in public estimation and to show the greatness of this genuine product of the ancient Tamilakam would be a task worthy of

the ripest scholar. It is no wonder that this antique work should have through the ages excited the interest and curiosity of the Tamil people. Its subject matter is the history of the Tamil race itself, the life of the ancient Tamil country. *Tolkappiyam* would furnish a mine of classical and ethnological lore. And though it is not possible, in the light of researches that have been carried so far, to agree with Mr. Manicka Naicker when he says* that a critical study of *Tolkappiyam* will enable us to discover the philosophy incorporated in the Tamil language, which embraces in full the main principles of all the six schools of Hindu philosophy, it is at least easy to maintain, with him, that much of Tamil literature and many stages of grammars should have existed before *Tolkappiyam* to justify the existence of this perfect grammar. Take

* *The Tamil Alphabet—Its Mystic Aspect*, p. 73.

for instance another work, *Silappathikaram*. It is unique in the literature of the world; for we have no instance of a similar work in any other literature by a royal author who had given up the pomp and pageantry of royalty and taken holy orders, and yet composed an epic dealing with many temporal institutions, pleasures, lives, habits, and ideals of various castes and professions in commemorating the life of a virtuous woman. It would be difficult to find a similar instance in the whole range of the world's literature of a royal author dealing, from the vantage ground of impartiality, with the life and times of his brother, who was the ruler of the land, and those of his contemporaries. The moral fervour and the æsthetic perfection of the work are unsurpassed and unsurpassable. *The Kural* is another splendid masterpiece in Tamil literature, one of the noblest and purest expressions

of human thought. The immortal author of this work, a product indubitably of the pre-third Sangam culture, which ought to have stocked his mind, and which should be itself rich and copious, addresses himself irrespective of caste, creed, or race, of border, breed, or birth to the whole humankind, formulates sovereign morality and absolute reason, proclaims in their eternal abstractedness virtue and truth, describes the highest laws of domestic and social life, and analyses in a graceful and masterly fashion the subtlest emotions of the human heart.* That early Dravidian literature was assiduously cultivated in the South independent of Aryan influence for centuries, before even Sanskrit attained to any literary grace, is now acknowledged by eminent Orientalists.†

* *Vide* M. Ariel's letter to Burnouf published in the *Journal Asiatique*, 1848.

† *The Tamilian Antiquary* No. 8.

The Tamil alphabet is also independent of Sanskrit. The discussion of the origin of the Indian alphabet occupied two sittings of the Congress of Orientalists at Leyden in 1883, and the hypothesis which met with most acceptance was the Phœnician hypothesis. The Phœnician alphabet, as developed in South Arabia, gave origin to the Indian alphabet. This view is supported by Prof. Weber, Dr. Buhler, the Rev. Isaac Taylor, and Mr. Cust. The vattelutu alphabet which has influenced the Tamil was certainly like the Semitic alphabet in several points.* It is thus evident that the Tamil alphabetical system is not affected by the Indo-Aryans, but by the Phœnicians of West Asia.

In the sphere of religion, the Dravidians in certain respects remain unaffected by Aryan influences, and have even

* *J. R. A. S. 1886.—Ancient Navigation in the Indian Ocean* by J. Edkins.

produced an appreciable effect upon the Aryas themselves. The brahmanical systems of thought and practice founded on the Vedas have never gained universal acceptance. Their supremacy was challenged by Jainism and Buddhism even in the country watered by the Ganges and the Jumna, the region which was their own stronghold, and their appeal was everywhere made almost exclusively to the higher castes who could have formed only a minority of the population. The vast bulk of the people were either confessedly or at heart worshippers of the more primitive forms of faith*. Those vedic Gods, the etymology of whose names is not patent, and who have no analogues in other Indo-Germanic dialects, must have been originally Dravidian deities. The Aryan God, Varuna, was probably the God of the Dravidian tribes, being on the borders of the sea to

* *Vide Ancient India* by Rapson, pp. 34-35.

whom the Aryan Rishis accorded a place in their pantheon. The Aryan Rudra is another God of the Dravidian tribes. He is essentially a mountain deity, and could be evolved by the wild mountaineers, say of the Vindhyan region, and not by dwellers on the plains. His name, Rudra, meaning the 'Red One,' seems to be a translation of the Dravidian name Siva. Korravai, the victorious one, was the object of worship among the oldest peoples of the South, and is the great demoness whose worship is performed under many names in the devil temples of every southern village. The Brahmans have transferred her attributes to Uma, the wife of Siva, and call her Durga. The hill-god of the South, the son of Korravai, is Murugan, the fragrant one, and he too has been admitted into the Hindu pantheon, and invested with the attributes of Karttikeyan, the warlike son of Siva. The Aryan God, Tvashta,

was perhaps the Dravidian God of artificers. The God of the Dravidian agricultural tribes was merged in the personality of the vedic Indra. The vedic God Krishna corresponds to the God of the Dravidian pastoral tribes. Saivism, worship of Siva or Skanda, was in vogue among the mountain tribes long before the advent of the Aryas into the South. Thus Brahmanism in the South did not supersede any cherished national divinities, but only embodied them in a new order. For its own self-preservation, it had to admit all kinds of local deities into the Hindu pantheon. Before closing this brief reference to the vast subject of religion, I shall simply draw the attention of the thoughtful reader to the following remarks of Sir Charles Elliot:—"Indian religion is commonly regarded as the offspring of an Aryan religion brought into India by invaders from the north, and modified by

contact with the Dravidian civilization. The materials at our disposal hardly permit us to take any other point of view; for the literature of the Vedic Aryans is relatively ancient and full, and we have no information about the old Dravidians comparable with it. But, *were our knowledge less one-sided, we might see that it would be more correct to describe the Indian religion as Dravidian religion stimulated and modified by the ideas of foreign invaders.* For the greatest deities of Hinduism, Siva, Krishna, Rama, Durga, and some of its most essential doctrines such as metempsychosis and divine incarnations are either totally unknown to the Veda or obscurely adumbrated in it. The chief characteristics of the mature Indian religion are not the characteristics of religion in Persia, Greece, or other Aryan lands*."

* *Hinduism and Buddhism—An Historical Sketch* by Sir Charles Elliot, Book I, p. XV, Introduction.

The influence of the Dravidians on the culture of India has been ignored, because the literature, which records the development of the Hindu religion in India, was the work of a hostile priesthood whose only object was to magnify its own pretensions, and decry everything Dravidian. But the truth is that the Dravidians had already developed a civilization of their own, long before the Aryan civilization was transplanted into their midst. The division of society among the Tamils shows that they had emerged out of savagery at a remote period, and had enjoyed an orderly, peaceful, and settled form of government for centuries Their civilization was more ancient than that of the Aryas; for among the latter the fighting men were next in rank to the priests, whereas among the Tamils the farmers were next to the religious men, and the military class was below that of herdsmen and artisans. The Vedas

present a picture of the social and political condition of the Dasyus, the Dravidian foes of the Aryas. Since the Southern Dravidians were the same as those of the north, the picture of the condition of the Dravidians portrayed in the vedic works may also be taken as true of the condition of the Dravidians of Southern India. According to the Mantras*, the Dasyus had a civilization not inferior to the Aryan. They were rich in horses, cows, hundred-gated cities, jewels, castles, palaces, houses of stone, and arms. Their armour-plated chariots could resist spears and arrows. Like the Aryas, they lived in cities under kings. They raided the Arya cities, carried off their cattle, and confined them in stone prisons. Their Gods like those of the Aryas lived in gold, silver, and iron castles. They knew how to form well-ordered villages,

* Mr. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar—*Age of the Mantras.*

to allot lands, to make forts and buildings, and to prepare reservoirs or tanks for irrigation.*

The earliest Dravidians were not primitive tribes, but tilled the ground and raised crops of various kinds (e.g.) rice, sesamum etc. They were agriculturists by nature. But it is generally supposed that the Aryans were the first to introduce agriculture into South India, and asserted by some scholars that the Ramayana is nothing but an allegorical account of the event. Nevertheless, there are grounds for believing that the art existed in South India long before the Aryans entered it. The fabulous stories relating to the dispute between Ukrama Pandyan and Indra† the controller of the clouds, and the valiant defence of them on another occasion by

* *Vide* Baden Powell's *Village Communities in India*, p. 49.

† *Oriental Historical Manuscripts* by William Taylor, p. 94.

the race of Karkatthar* show the great efforts made by the princes and peoples in the matter of irrigating their lands for purposes of cultivation. Of course these evidences, resting as they do on tradition, can only be accepted with caution. That the Tamilians had made very great strides in the direction of agricultural enterprise in ancient times, "the only Tamil poem of the age of the Mahabharata War preserved to us in a compilation of the Madura Sangam proves beyond the shadow of a doubt. I refer to the complimentary and eulogistic poem addressed to the great Chera King Uthian on his return from the field of Kurukshethiram by a royal poet of the times named "the crowned Naga King" of the country of Murunchi who is believed to have flourished in the times of the First Sangam. The poem above re-

* Mr. T. Ponnambalam Pillay's Presidential Address, Saiva Conference, Palamcotta, 1912.

ferred to is included in the Sangam work entitled Pura Nanuru, and sings the praises of a Chera monarch who supplied rations of rice to both the contending armies in the Mahabharata War for all the eighteen days of the fight*." The chronology of the first two Sangams has not been once for all settled, and even their existence has been regarded by some as purely a figment of the diseased imagination, and the reference to the existence of a Tamil poet of the days of the Mahabharata is regarded as unhistorical and too fanciful to be believed. It is now coming to be more and more recognised that the traditions of a people can never be rejected in toto by any scholar worth the name. The idea is happily gaining ground that it is no longer correct to declare that the person who seeks information from ancient

***Tamilian Antiquities,*—V. J. Tamby Pillai, *The Siddhanta Dipika,* Vol. 5, p. 170.

tradition should first prove that it is worthy of attention; for now the duty rather lies on the person who pronounces a tradition to be worthless to give reasons for his assertion. I shall content myself with simply remarking that, if we can rely on the authenticity and genuineness of this poem, no more evidence would seem to be necessary to establish the fact that even so early as the age of the Mahabharata, the cultivation of paddy was carried on on a gigantic scale on this side of the Vindhya mountains. The names of Marutham, மருதம், the land where paddy and other grains are cultivated with the aid of irrigation, and of paddy, நெல், are Dravidian terms*. The term paddy was not known to the Aryans at the time of their first appearance. Sir John Hewitt in his treatise on *The Pre-historic Ruling Races* says that the Dravidians were of all the great races of antiquity

* Ponnambalam Pillai's address *Ibid.*

the first to systematise agriculture. Archæology also confirms the evidence obtained from tradition, literature, and language as regards the acquaintance of the ancient Tamils with agriculture. The labours of Alexander Rea, M. J. Walhouse, Captain Newbold, Colonel Branfill, Burgess, Dr. Caldwell, R. B. Foote, R. Sewell, and other distinguished archæologists have made us familiar with the existence of monuments such as rude stone circles, cromlechs, dolmens, menhirs, Kistvaens, urns, Tumuli, Pandukulies at Adichanallur, Perumbair, Coimbatore, Pallavaram, Palmanir in North Arcot, Kollur near Tirukovilur, and many other places in South India. It is affirmed that the people, who used these burial urns, must have been an agricultural race, as brass and iron implements of agriculture were often found buried in their graves*.

* *The Siddhanta Dipika*, Vol. 5, p. 169.

The Dravidians had made much progress in the industrial arts. They worked in metals. The Dravidian name for a smith, karuma, from which the vedic Karmara is probably borrowed, meant a smelter. Their artificers made ornaments of gold, pearls, and of precious stones for their kings. The Dravidians had entered India several centuries earlier than the Aryans. They established mighty kingdoms in the north and south, and supplanted everywhere the uncivilized tribes, with whom they came into collision, and whom they retained as slaves to kill and fight for them. They reached a high degree of civilization by their own unaided efforts and independently of the Aryans*, and in some respects as regards refinement and culture, they were more advanced than the shepherd Aryans. The reason, why the Aryan irruption was so different in Southern

* *Hindu Law at Madras, J. R. A. S.*, Vol. p. 1831, 219.

India from what it was in the North, appears to be that, when the Aryans penetrated to the South, there existed already well-organised communities and kingdoms. The Aryans, though they communicated something of their own civilization to the Dravidians, were not able to incorporate them thoroughly into their own society and to root out their languages and peculiar civilization. On the other hand, they learned the languages of those races, and adopted a portion of their civilization*. As Kennedy says†, the Aryans did much work because they were a very mixed race. The whole history of India has consisted in the gradual and progressive blending of the dissimilar elements, the Aryan genius contributing the guiding spirit as well as the form of this mixed civilization, while the aboriginal element has

* *Early History of the Deccan*—R. G. Bhandarkar, p. 5.

† *J. R. A. S.* 1913, p. 706.

contributed its contents. The Southern Dravidians were never disturbed by any extensive immigration in after times, and hence they retained their distinctive characteristics. There can be no doubt that the Aryan civilization was very greatly influenced by the Dravidians*. And when it is remembered that the Dravidian architecture is of indigenous origin, and has had its own course of evolution, and that southern art is different from the northern†, it will be easily conceded that the Dravidian civilization has had an independent development of its own. With regard to the ancient civilization of the Tamil nation, there is more or less a consensus of opinion among oriental scholars including Prof. J. Vinson. In this connection, it is hoped, the remarks of Dr. Rabindra-

* *Ancient India*—Rapson, p. 29.

† *Early History of the Deccan*—R. G. Bhandarkar, p. 5.

nath Tagore will be found interesting. He says, ' Let no one imagine that the non-Aryan contributions...had no value of their own. As a matter of fact, the old Dravidian culture was by no means to be despised, and the result of its combination with the Aryan, which formed the Hindu civilization, acquired both richness and depth under the influence of its Dravidian component. Dravidians might not be introspective or metaphysical, but they were artists, and they could sing, design, and construct. The transcendental thought of the Aryan, by its marriage with the emotional and creative art of the Dravidian gave birth to an offspring, which was neither fully Aryan nor Dravidian, but Hindu."*

In the field of commerce, the activity of the ancient Dravidians has been equally striking. South India, the home of the Ancient Dravidians, was

* *A Vision of India—Viswa-Bharathi*, Quarterly, No. 1.

the heart and centre of the old world for ages. It is one of the foremost maritime countries, and was the mistress of the eastern seas. It is here possible to give only a few rude outlines of South Indian commerce in general. The subject is too large, too intricate, and too difficult to be dealt with to allow here of a detailed and circumstantial description.

The Dravidians of South India were accustomed to the sea. They formed a large proportion of the sailors of the Indian Ocean. It is believed that regular maritime intercourse existed between South India and Western Asia even before the 8th century B. C. Various proofs have been adduced to establish the high antiquity of the maritime intercourse of South India with West Asia. The Dravidian speaking races of India traded with the Ancient Chaldeans, before the Vedic language

found its way into India. Indian teak was found in the ruins of Ur, and it must have reached there from India in the fourth millennium B. C., when it was the seaport of Babylon and the capital of the Sumerian kings. "This particular tree grows in Southern India where it advances close to the Malabar coast and nowhere else; there is none to the north of the Vindhya."* This shows how advanced and enterprising were the Dravidians even as early as 4,000 years ago.

The Story of Joseph, who came to Egypt abut 1700 B.C., is a notable evidence of the early caravan trade, which, crossing Arabia, carried the merchandise of India to Egypt, Syria, and Babylonia. In the tombs, dating from the time of the 18th Dynasty of the Egyptian rulers which ended in 1462 B.C., were found mummies wrapped in Indian muslins.

* *Vide* Ragozin's *Vedic India*, p. 305.

The Egyptians of those times, says Prof. Lassen, dyed cloth with indigo, and this vegetable product could have been obtained only from India at a time when the major portion of it was still non-Aryan.† But Thompson, after examining with the aid of a microscope some fragments of mummy clothes preserved in the British Museum, came to the conclusion that they were all linen, and not cotton. As to the indigo, Sir George Wilkinson says that the broad-coloured borders of these clothes are similar to patterns which occur in paintings of the 16th and 18th Dynasties, and he does not explicitly state that indigo was used during the time of the 18th Dynasty.

The Egyptians employed in their naval expeditions the Phoenicians. Hiram, King of Tyre, and the Hebrew king, David, father of Solomon, combined in joint commercial expeditions

† G. Oppert—*On the Ancient Commerce of India.*

to Ophir. The Ophir expedition started once in three years. The ships of Tarshish left Elath on the Bay of Elath or Ailah, proceeded to Berenike on the Egyptian coast, and thence to Okelis at the mouth of the Arabian Gulf. From this harbour, or from Kane on the Erythraean Sea, the ships sailed to the mouth of the Indus or to Barygaza, (Broach in the Gulf of Cambay), or to Muziris, or some other southern port. 'The navy of Tarshish brought gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks from India.' Solomon (962—930 B. C.) is said to have got sandalwood, apes, and peacocks from Ophir *via* ports on the Persian Gulf. The peacocks, which are mentioned to have been brought from India, are called in the Bible Tukkiyam, a plural form of Tukki, in which word scholars have recognised the Tamil word 'Togei' as can be seen in old Hebrew dictionaries. The

Dravidian name of peacock in the Bible intimates the presence of Dravidian traders. Ophir is identified with the Abeira of Ptolemy, the district bordering on the mouths of the Indus. These statements are not met with universal acceptance. Ophir, it is said, is not an Indian port, but a place in Arabia. It is said that it was not sandalwood, but something else taken for sandalwood, that was received by Solomon. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the period of Solomon was one of great commercial activity. It is possible that the trade, which glorified his age, was carried on with some briskness by his neighbours with India for some centuries past.

As regards Indian trade with Assyria, it may be noted that gold, tin, silks, pearls, spices, and other valuable kinds of merchandise had been flowing from India into Assyria, since the

foundation of the first Assyrian Empire in the 14th century B. C. The early Greek bards such as Homer were acquainted with tin and other articles of Indian merchandise. That gold was largely exported from India in very early days has been inferred from a number of corroborative facts. M. M. Perrot and Chipiez inferred, from objects found in the excavations, from inscriptions in which the Assyrians boast of their wealth and prodigality, and from Egyptian texts in which the details of tribute paid by the Syrians and Mesopotamians are given, that Nineveh possessed a vast quantity of gold, which she obtained from her commerce with mineral-producing countries such as India. In an old Babylonian list of clothes occurs the word Sindhu, and all scholars are agreed that this meant Indian cloth. This cloth did not reach Babylonia through Persia by land; for,

in that case, the original 's' would have become 'h' in Persian mouths. The tribes, among whom the Vedic Mantras were composed, knew of the sea and sea-voyages by report, and not at first hand, and therefore this export trade was carried on by the Dravidian-speaking races alone *. That there existed sea-borne commerce between South India and West Asia prior to the 8th century B. C. cannot now be denied; nevertheless, some more evidence is required to establish it beyond the possibility of a doubt.

But for the period subsequent to the 8th century B. C., the available evidence becomes fuller, and so it is possible to make an authoritative statement. †The receipt of Indian elephants as presents by Shalmaneser IV of Assyria (727—722 B. C.), the discovery of a beam of Indian

* *Vide* Ragozin's *Vedic India*, p. 307.

† *Vide* Kennedy's article, J. R. A. S., 1898.

cedar at Birs Nimrud in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar III (604-562 B.C.), the reference in the *Baveru-Jataka to the adventures of certain Indian merchants who took the first peacock by sea to Babylon, the importation into Babylon of the Indian rice and the Indian sandal-wood, and the acquaintance in Babylon of the Hebrew compilers of I Kings and II Chronicles with the Tamil names of these exports, these bear eloquent testimony to the existence of sea-borne commerce between India and West Asia in the 8th, 7th, and 6th centuries prior to the Christian era. This trade was chiefly in the hands of the Dravidians who had a colony in Babylon.‡ Baudhayana's condemnation of the Northern Aryans who took part in this trade with West Asia proves that they were not the chief agents in it, although they had a

* No. 339, Jataka iii, the Cambridge Edition.

‡ *Vide* Kennedy's Article on *The Early Commerce of Babylon with India*—J. R. A. S., 1898.

not inconsiderable share.

Kautilya, the reputed author of the *Arthasastra* or 'Manual of Politics', was of opinion that the commerce with the south was of greater importance than that with the north, because the more precious commodities came from the peninsula, while the northern regions supplied only blankets, skins, and horses. Gold, diamonds, pearls, and conch shells are specified as the products of the south. Madura was famous for her textile fabrics. From *Tolkappiyam** we learn that the Tamils used to cross oceans for the purpose of acquiring wealth. Taking advantage of the constant intercourse between South India and the countries in West Asia and East Europe, one of the Pandya rulers of Madura in 20 B.C. sent an embassy to the Emperor Augustus, and another sent for Grecian soldiers, and employed them as his bodyguard.

* Porulathikaram Vol I, part 1, Sutra 34.

The fact that the Dravidians carried on the Indian trade with West Asia is strengthened by other evidences. The Dravidian name for ships, *oda*, is an original word, and not borrowed from Sanskrit. The Sanskrit name of pearl (mukta) is from the Tamil *muttu*, its name in the land where it was dived for. The Greek name for rice, *oryza*, was borrowed straight from the Tamil *arisi*, and not through its sanskritised form vrihi, and the Greek peperi is the Dravidian *pippali*, long pepper. If the Greeks received rice and pepper from India, and if these names are Dravidian words, we obtain an additional proof of the non-Aryan element represented in the Indian trade*.

From *Mahavamso*, *Rajavali*, *Rajarathnakari*, we learn that from very early times there were relations established between the Singhalese kings and

* Oppert.—*On the Ancient Commerce of India*, p. 37.

the Chola and Pandya rulers. In the 6th century B. C., a Pandya princess married Vijaya, the 'Lion born,' and the founder of an illustrious dynasty of princes in Ceylon *. From some unnamed port in the southernmost section of the eastern coast, near Tuticorin, ships sailed to the opposite coast of Ceylon. By this route Vijaya's Pandyan bride and her retinue were conveyed to their new home; his ambassadors having already come by it from Ceylon to the Pandyan coast. The descriptions of the various voyages in the legends connected with the life and times of Buddha imply that the vessels were ships of large size and carried a large number of passengers. For instance the ship in which Vijaya's Pandyan bride was taken over to Ceylon consisted of elephants, horses, and waggons worthy of a king, 18 officers of state, craftsmen, and a

* Radhakumud Mookerjee's *Indian Shipping*, p. 70.

thousand families of the 18 guilds *, 75 menial servants, slaves, the princess, and 700 virgins who accompanied her. The vessels employed were sailing ships. The crews were well-organised. The seamen had considerable nautical skill†. In the same epoch, we hear of the existence of matrimonial relations between the people of the Pandya kingdom and those of Ceylon. About 205 B. C., a chief known as Elala sailed with an army from the Chola country to Ceylon, and conquered it‡. Usurper and stranger though he was, even the priestly Buddhist chronicles bear witness to the eminent qualities of this Tamilian who ruled the kingdom for well-nigh forty-four years administering justice with impartiality to friends and foes. People from the Chola and Pandya

* P. 59, Geiger's *Mahavamsa*.

† *The Deccan in the time of Gautama Buddha* by Thomas Foulkes, *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. 16, pp. 49-57 and pp. 1-8.

‡ P. 353, *Ceylon* by J. E. Tennent.

kingdoms sailed to Manthottam, opposite Danushkodi, and plundered Ceylon. Some Tamils established settlements, and raised magnificent temples in the island. These relations, established with Ceylon, incontestably prove that the Tamils were a great sea-faring people in those ancient times.

From several centuries before the Christian era, a double stream of traders and adventurers began to flow into Indo-China from Southern India, through Burma and its southern coasts, by sea, and founded there settlements and commercial stations. Besides, there is no doubt of the antiquity of South Indian commerce with China. It is well-known that there existed communication by land and sea between the furthest east of China and the utmost south of India. From a study of *Manimekalai*, it may be inferred that the Tamils, even before the Christian era, traded with the

islands of Sumatra, Java, and Malaya *.

The existence in the Tamil language of pure Tamil words like *kadal*, *paravai*, *punari*, *arkali*, and *munnir*, all of which refer to the sea, and of words like *kalam*, *marakalam*, *mithavai*, and *kappal*, which are also original Tamil words, and which all denote a ship, proves that the Tamils in the earliest times were a sea-faring people †.

During the early centuries of the Christian era, there was an extensive trade between South India and Rome. Roman subjects lived at Muziris and other towns. Muziris was one of the famous emporiums on the western coast of Tamilakam, much frequented by Yavana merchants. From Peutingerian Tables (225 A. D.), we learn that the Romans had in this city a force of about 2000 men to protect their trade and a

* *Sen Tamil*, Vol. 5, p. 419.

† *Sen Tamil*, Vol. 13, p. 156.

temple erected in honour of Augustus. There was a Grecian colony of Byzantium on the Malabar coast. † It is now well-known that in the early centuries of the Christian era there was a large influx of foreign merchants, and that a considerable quantity of Roman *aurei* and *dinarii* must have been imported into India for purposes of merchandise, and indeed we read of gifts in *dinarii* for the maintenance of lamps in temples. Small coins were also locally minted by a colony or colonies of foreigners. The importance of Roman commerce was so great that the local money should to a large extent have been replaced by the Roman. There have been discovered in the South of India numerous hoards of Roman coins at Kottayam near Tellicherry, Kaliyanputtur in the Madura District, Pollachi, Karuvur, and Vellalur in the Coimbatore district,

† *Tamilian Antiquary*, No. 1 Vol. II, p. 41.

Pudukkottai, and at other places. These facts incontestably prove that the commerce of South India with Rome could not have been inconsiderable. Indian goods went to Rome through Alexandria. Later on, Byzantium also participated in the receipt of Indian goods. Pearl fishery was an important national industry in South India. * It was chiefly as the country from which pearls came that the Greeks knew Southern India. Pearls came from the coasts of the Pandya kingdom and Megasthenes had heard of Pandaea, the daughter of Heracles (Krishna), who had become Queen of a great kingdom in the South. With her he also connected the pearl. Heracles wandered over the world for ridding land and sea of the monsters that infested them, and had found this thing of beauty in the sea made, it might seem, for a woman's adornment. Where-

*The Cambridge History of India, p. 423, Vol. 1.

fore from all the sea pearls were brought together to the Indian coast for his daughter to wear. The pearl in India according to Arrian was worth thrice its weight in refined gold†. There was brisk trade between South India and Rome in pearls. Roman ladies were very fond of these pearls. They adorned nearly every part of their body with them, even down to the straps of their sandals, making their presence known by the clinking of pearl-strings. Lolla, wife of the emperor Caius Claudius, appeared often publicly covered with pearls worth £ 300,000 sterling. The story about the wager between Queen Cleopatra of Egypt and the Triumvir Antonius is well-known. She possessed two large pearls used as pendants of the ear which had previously been the property of other Eastern sovereigns and were valued highly. She

† *Ind. Ant.* 1876, p. 89.—The *INDICA* of Arrian.

dissolved one pearl worth £80,000 in strong vinegar, drank it, and was only prevented by an attendant of Antonius from dissolving the other pearl. The exports of South India to the western Roman Empire were crystals, onyx, sardonyx, hyacinths, amethysts, corundum, smaragds, carbuncles, beryls, sapphires, chrysolites, and opals. The Roman Senator, Nonius, was proscribed by Antonius for the sake of an opal which was in his possession. Nonius escaped leaving all his treasures behind, but took away with him his opal ring valued at £ 8,000 sterling. Pliny is indignant that two millions sterling of Roman money were annually swallowed by India.

Foreign visitors obtained pepper, cassia, and sandalwood from the Malabar coast. The coins of Yagna-Sri, the ruler of the Andhras, bear unmistakable testimony to the existence of sea-borne trade on the Coromandel coast

in the second century of the Christian era.* Along the Coromandel coast, from Nellore as far south as Cuddalore and Pondicherry, a class of thin copper die-struck coins occurs. They are found in considerable numbers in or near dunes and sand-knolls in the vicinity of the *kupams* or fishing hamlets that stud the shore, together with Roman obloi, perforated Chinese coins, bits of lead and other metal, beads, etc. These are collected by the wives and children of the fishermen after gales of wind or heavy rains, and purchased from them by the itinerant pedlars, called Labis and Merkayars, in exchange for useful necessaries, by whom they are sold to braziers and copper-smiths. The discovery of articles of this description in such localities indicates the existence of a considerable maritime trade in former times, probably during the first four or

* Radhakumud Mookerji's *Indian Shipping*, p. 50.

five centuries of the Christian era. The copper die-struck coins might have belonged to the period when the Kurumbars, a pastoral tribe, were ruling on the Coromandel coast for some hundred years before the seventh century A. D. They are stated to have been engaged in trade, and to have owned ships, and carried on a considerable commerce by sea. On the reverse of these coins, there is a figure of a two-masted ship like the modern coasting vessel or *dhoni*, steered by means of oars from the stern.* It can safely be asserted therefore that these coins bear witness to a great maritime traffic in the early centuries of the Christian era.

The earliest Tamil works that we have refer to sea-trade in the beginning of the Christian era as an ordinary occupation of the Tamil people. From

* *Vide* Elliot's *Coins of Southern India*, pp. 35-37, Radhakumud Mookerji's *Indian Shipping* pp. 50-52, and *Catalogue of Indian Coins* by Rapson p. LXXXII.

Manimekhalai we learn that in Java a king by name Aputhran was ruling at Nagapuri, and that the heroine Manimekhalai sailed across to the island, and paid a visit to him. The oldest Tamil proverbs have their own tale to tell regarding the ancient civilization and history of the Tamils. "Though Elalasingan's goods go across the seven seas, they will return safely." A proverb like this affords abundant testimony to the maritime and commercial activity of the time of Elalasingan, a contemporary of the immortal author of the *Kural*.

The two chief ports of Tamilakam were Muziris or Cranganore (Muyirikkodu), the great port of the Chera kingdom, and Bakarai or Vaikkarai, the haven of Kottayam, now in the Travancore State. Korkai, the Greek Kolkhoi, on the Tamraparni river was the principal seat of the pearl trade. Puhar, where a colony of Yavana merchants

had settled * at the mouth of the Kaveri, was a rich and prosperous emporium of trade on the Eastern coast. These merchants had a separate quarter of their own, and were in possession of rare and precious articles for sale. The grandeur of this great emporium of South India (*i.e.*) Puhar is very vividly brought home to our minds by Kadiyalur Rudirangannanar in his work *Pattinappalai* composed in praise of Karikala Chola who according to the best authorities was flourishing in the first century of the Christian era. The poet says in the course of his description of this ancient Chola city, "Adjoining the fishermen's quarters is the well-guarded broad street containing the store-houses of merchants. In the front-yards of these stores are heaped bales and parcels, which have been imported, and which have to be exported. These consign-

* *Tamilian Antiquary*, Vol. II, No. 1, p. 45.

ments are imprinted with marks of tiger by the customs-officers for the purpose of levying customs due to the state. These officers are as vigilant in their duty as the horses of the sun. Rams and dogs go skipping about on the heaps of bales and parcels." Other streets in the wealthy quarters are then taken up. There are the abodes of the Moors, the Chinese, and others who have come down from distant lands, and settled here amidst the natives. . . . The merchants always conduct their sales stating expressly their net profit. . . Flags indicating gay taverns, flags posted in places where paddy, betel and nut, sweets, etc., are sold, flags lifted up on the ships anchored in the harbour, these and others are so many, that the city is beautifully shaded, and the sun can find no way to let in his scorching rays. In this emporium are found the produce of the Kaveri and the Ganges

victuals from Ceylon and Kadaram, corals from the eastern ocean, pearls from the southern ocean, sandal and scents from the western mountains, gems and gold from the Himalayas, and horses and pepper brought in by ships*. Karaikal, Manmelkudi, Aludayarpattinam, Ammalpattinam, Kottaipattinam, Devipattinam, Tutukudi, Kayalpattinam, Kulasekharapattinam, Tondi, all these might have been the other great sea-port towns in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Tamil poets tell us of the vases and lamps of the Yavanas and of the European soldiers who wore fine armour, and defended the city of Madura with courage. *Purananuru*, an ancient Tamil classical work of the early centuries of the Christian era, speaks with admiration of the great and beautiful ships of the Yavanas which

***The Siddhanta Dipika*, Vol. IV, p. 19.—article of Mr. T. Chelvakesavaraya Mudaliar, M. A.

frequented the port of Muziris*. The ancient Tamils used to have light-houses (கலங்கரை விளக்கம்) to warn ships,† besides customs houses, warehouses, godowns, docks and piers, ‡ and one such light-house is described at the great port of Puhar (Kaveripumpattinam) at the mouth of the Kaveri, a big tower or a big palmyra trunk carrying on the top of it a huge oil-lamp. Tradition, as recorded in Tamil literature, indicates that from very remote times wealthy cities existed in the south, and that many of the refinements and luxuries of life were in common use. The singular good fortune of Tamilakam in possessing such coveted commodities as gold, pearls, conch shells, pepper, beryls, and choice cotton goods attracted foreign traders from the earliest ages. Commerce supplied the

* Prof. Dubreuil's Article, *India and the Romans, Ind. Ant.*, Vol. LII, pp. 51-52.

† *Sen Tamil*, Vol. 13, p. 159.

‡ Pandit Olaganatha Pillai's *Cholan Karikalan The First*, p. 44.

wealth required for life on civilized lines.

Before closing the subject, a word may be said about the influence of foreign nations upon the history of the ancient Dravidians. The Dravidians, who visited Babylon during their commercial intercourse, brought with them a knowledge of the Phoenician alphabet, of coinage, of the solar-signs and week-days,* and perhaps of architecture. The influence of Babylonian architecture is perhaps seen in the miniature huts erected along the exterior edge of each stage in the 'raths' at Mahabalipuram. The Dravidians like the Accadians of Babylon venerated mountains, and expressed their veneration in a unique and striking form. If the elementary conceptions of art and architecture were indigenous, there was scope for the borrowing of detail. One is struck with the striking resem-

* *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Vol. XIII No. 2, p. 617.

blance between the pyramids of Egypt and the famous pagodas of Tanjore and Madura. The kernel of the story of the Deluge was imported by the Dravidians from Babylon in pre-Aryan times*. That the Dravidians in their turn should have exercised a considerable influence upon foreign nations goes without saying. But this subject regarding the debt which South India owes to the nations of West Asia and the influences, cultural and religious, she in turn exercised upon those nations, deserves a more thorough research and investigation, before anything like a definite verdict can be said upon it.

To conclude, it has been indubitably shown that South India had considerable commercial intercourse with the different nations of antiquity. The enrichment of civilization consequent upon the constant and lively interchange of ideas and experiences with the myriad races

* Ragozin's *Vedic India*, p. 344.

of the ancient world, the high degree of material prosperity that followed in virtue of this extraordinary commercial enterprise, and the remarkable outburst of literary and intellectual activity, witnessed during the Augustan Age of Tamil literature, which, I venture to believe, is the outcome of that prosperity, these along with a distinct non-Aryan alphabet, a highly cultivated language exclusively Dravidian, a polished literature composed on Dravidian lines and independent of Sanskrit models, an indigenous system of religion, and an advanced civilization independent of Aryan influences are a few among the momentous factors that entitle the ancient Dravidians to a high place among the nations of antiquity.

ANCIENT SOUTH INDIAN POLITY

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The subject of Ancient South Indian Polity is one that has not hitherto been worked out in all its multifarious aspects. Only a rough outline of the evolution of political institutions may now be attempted reserving for a subsequent monograph a more detailed investigation. It is a theme that bristles with difficulties innumerable owing to insufficient data and uncertain chronology. Every assertion is liable to be contradicted, and every statement is open to serious objection at the hands of critics and scholars. The period taken up for investigation covers a very vast period consisting of nany different stages, each one of which may require a volume by itself, and will require the labours of many different savants and antiquarians.

It is therefore with considerable diffidence that the present attempt is made to sketch in brief the development of political institutions in Peninsular India from the tribal stage of society to the fully organised national kingdoms, checked and controlled by popular institutions, of the early centuries of the Christian era.

The subject of Ancient South Indian polity, here taken up for study, embraces three distinct periods known as the prehistoric period (from the earliest times up to 1000 B. C.), the semi-historic period (1000-100 B. C.), and the historic period (100 B. C.-400 A. D.) I call the first period as pre-historic, because the account for that period is largely traditional, and can hardly be shown to be conclusively and authoritatively true in the present state of our knowledge of this period. The second period I have labelled semi-historic, because a few

genuine facts may be inferred from the material at our disposal, and this period may be brought within the pale of authentic history by patient and laborious research in the future. As for the third period, commonly known as the Augustan Period in Tamil literature, otherwise called the epoch of the Third Sangam, its historicity has gained the almost unanimous assent of scholars.

At the outset, the first point to be discussed in connection with the resuscitation of the lost South Indian polity is the sources of our knowledge for the period under review. For the first period, the sources, which throw light upon the institutions, social and political, of South India, are the hymns of the Rigveda where we have numerous references to the Dravidians in general. The sources for the second period are the observations made by writers like Hewitt on the probable primitive institu-

tions of the Dravidian races from a study of survivals, and the *Tolkappiyam.* The two great Indo-Aryan epics, the vestiges of Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Roman civilizations which illuminate the early intercourse of South India with Western Asia, the Buddhist chronicles of Ceylon, the observations of Megasthenes, Asoka's Rock Edicts, The *Halasya Mahatmya*, these, which shed a very feeble light on the political history proper of South India during this period, are not at all, it is regrettable to note, helpful in the laborious task of reconstructing bit by bit the early polity of South India. For the third period, we have the reputed works of the ThirdSangam like the *Kural, Ahananuru, Purananuru, Silappathikaram, Manimekhalai, Kalithokai,* and the *Ten Idylls*, all of which are now acknowledged by the generality of scholars to have belonged to the early centuries of the Christian era.

The age, when the *Tolkappiyam* was composed, has not as yet been definitely determined by scholars. It is curious that wide differences of opinion should exist on this vital question. Nachchinarkiniyar, the celebrated commentator of the *Tolkappiyam*, holds that it was composed, before even Veda Vyasa, who lived probably between 1500 and 1000 B. C., arranged the Vedas into Rig, Yajur, Saman, and Atharvana*. This view is also shared by Pandit A. Mootootambi Pillai† who however considers the 5th Millennium B. C., as the probable age of this ancient grammar. Pandit R. S. Vedachalam in his work entitled '*Ancient Tamilian and Aryan*' regards 1250 B. C. as the probable date of the *Tolkappiyam*, and he believes that it might be given even a higher

* Vide Pandit Saviriroyan's article, p. 42,—Siddhanta Dipika, Vol. III.

† Vide *History of Tenmolli*—Pandit Mootootambi Pillai.

antiquity, and placed about 2400 B. C. Such extravagant theories as these need not require refutation.

It is maintained by pandits of a certain type that every part of the *Tolkappiyam* is independent of Sanskrit, and devoid of any trace of Sanskrit influence. This view seems to be untenable for this reason that the *Tolkappiyam* throws light upon various subjects such as caste and forms of marriage in vogue among the Aryas. Tolkappiyar in his chapter on *Kalaviyal* seeks a reconciliation between the Aryan forms of love and wedding and the Tamil forms of marriage. The *Tolkappiyam** undoubtedly shows a medley of the Dravidian and Aryan institutions. It shows distinct traces of the influence of the Aryan immigrants. It should therefore have been composed at a time

* Dravidic Studies No. III, p. 11—Mr. S. Anavaratavinayakam Pillai, M. A.

when the Aryan Brahmins had already come to South India, and had even introduced their ceremonies and institutions. It can definitely be shown that the colonisation of the South by the northern Aryans should have commenced about the 10th century B. C. Hence the more probable and correct view of the matter would be to regard the *Tolkappiyam* as a post-colonisation work.

In his monograph on *the Aindra School of Sanskrit Grammarians*, Dr. Burnell assigns the eighth century A. D. as the probable date of Tolkappiyar*. This strange view is quite in keeping with the spirit of European scholars who are not prepared to concede any high antiquity to the Dravidian civilization or culture. The *Tolkappiyam*, according to tradition, is a work of the Second Madura Academy. Scholars are now almost agreed, though not quite, that the Third Madura

* Dr. Burnell—*On the Aindra Grammar*, p. 8.

Academy flourished during the early centuries of the Christian era. Therefore, the *Tolkappiyam*, a Second Sangam work, should have been composed before the commencement of the Christian era. The late lamented Kanakasabhai Pillai lends his weighty support to the view that it is a work of the first or second century B. C. Mr. Anavaratavinayakam Pillai, the distinguished Tamil scholar and President of the Lexicon Committee, seems also to favour the view that it cannot be assigned to any period later than the first century B. C. It is thus clear that the higher and lower limits should be between the 10th and the 1st centuries B. C. respectively.

Panambaranar, a contemporary of Tolkappiyar, in his preface to the *Tolkappiyam* says that Tolkappiyar mastered theSanskrit grammar of Indra, and that the *Tolkappiyam* was recited at the Court of Nilantharuthiruvirpandyan

and approved by Athankottasan. It is well-known that Panini's great Sanskrit grammar made an epoch in Indian literature; his name occurs everywhere, his treatise soon superseded all others, and has exercised the ingenuity of a countless number of followers. Certainly, for two thousand years and more, Panini's word has been law in Aryan India on all questions of grammar. It is evident that for it to have gained such a position of pre-eminence in so conservative a country as India, it must have been infinitely superior in the eyes of the Brahmans to all the numerous treatises which were undoubtedly in existence before Panini's time. And therefore it is a surprise to some scholars to find Tolkoppiyar, a Brahmin of Brahmins, the son of Jamagdagni and the pupil of Agastya, studying and following Indra's work in his grammar of the Tamil language. It is therefore argued

that Panini was not known to the Southerners of Tolkappiyar's time. Besides, one of the sixty-four predecessors quoted by Panini in the field of grammatical science was Indra, and Indra should therefore have flourished before Panini. Thus Tolkappiyar must have lived anterior to Panini. We shall now examine these views categorically. Scholars are divided in their opinion of Panini's date. While Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar assigns to him the 7th century B. C., Prof. A. B. Keith considers that Panini should have flourished about 300 B. C.* It is maintained by some that Indra's date† might be placed about 350 B. C. As regards the date of Indra, we can only remark that, assuming Indra to have been a historical personage and not a dim and shadowy mythical figure, and

* The Cambridge History of India, Vol. I, p. 113.

† *Studies in South Indian Jainism*, p. 39.

assuming him to be other than the modern Indra or Jainendra who lived sometime before the 12th century A.D., the date, 350 B. C., assigned to him may not be acceptable for this reason that even in the Vedic works Aindra grammatical terms are found. It is therefore beyond the possibility of a doubt that these words are much older than Panini. And yet we are forced to regard Indra and Panini as almost contemporaries, if the dates assigned by certain scholars be regarded as absolutely correct and above controversy.

But a more important point deserves consideration. In the opinion of Dr. Burnell, by the Aindra Grammar one must understand a school of grammar and not a specific work by an individual.* If the passages in which the Aindra Grammar is mentioned be examined

* Dr. Burnell's *The Aindra School of Sanskrit Grammarians*, p. 31.

closely, it will be seen that they really bear this meaning, and do not attribute an actual grammatical treatise to the God Indra. Indra was fabled to have originated the science of grammar, but the Indra (or Aindra) Grammar was the primitive grammatical science as handed down by various teachers. Therefore we are justified in assuming that two schools of grammar, those of Indra and Panini, might have existed side by side, and that Tolkappiyar preferred the Indra system to that of Panini. Therefore to argue that Tolkappiyar was anterior to Panini on the ground that he followed Indra's treatise and not Panini's may not be entirely sound. Besides, the naturalness and simplicity of Aindram might have appealed to Tolkappiyar more than the artificial and involved arrangement of Panini, just as the style of composition of Aindra's Grammar was the one adopted in the *Katantra* and

Katyayana's *Varttikas*, and several others which are presumably of a later age. Dr. Burnell himself admits that the Aindra treatises belong to a system older than Panini's, though there is perhaps reason to believe that not one of them is, as a whole, older than the grammar of the last.

In the opinion of certain Tamil scholars, it is even open to question whether Aindram, on the principles of which the *Tolkappiyam* is said to have been modelled, was a foreign element or an indigenous treatise on grammar.* Lastly it may be noted that Tolkappiyar nowhere tells us on what model he composed his grammar, and Panambaranar's prefatory note to the *Tolkappiyam* may after all turn out to be a later interpolation; but it may be stated with equal justification that there is nothing to throw doubt on Panambaranar's coloph-

* The *Tamilian Antiquary*, No. 5, p. 9.

on which could have been made for no possible reason, if untrue. Thus the famous colophon of Panambaranar, of which much capital was and is being made by Tamil scholars, is shown to be altogether valueless for the purpose of determining the age of the *Tolkappiyam*, and the outcome of our long and wearisome discussion seems to be to make the existing confusion worse confounded.

In Tennent's history of Ceylon the third erosion is stated to have occurred in 306 B. C. during the time of Devanampiya Tissa. Taking this last deluge as the one referred to in the *Iraiyanar Ahapporul*, some fix the third century B. C. as the lower limit of the *Tolkappiyam*. In their opinion, the testimony of the *Rajavali* and *Mahavamsa* bears witness to the same view. Besides 'Tolkappiyar's mention in his work of Hora, for a knowledge of which it seems we are indebted to the Greek astronomers that accom-

panied Alexander the Great in the course of his Indian raid, would fix the age of Tolkappiyar as the third century B. C.'*

But it is possible to assign to the *Tolkappiyam* even an earlier age than the third century B. C. It will be seen from the Sutras 24, 27, and 28 of Vol. I, part I, of the *Tolkappiyam Porulathikaram* that at the time of Tolkappiyar there were in use some Tamil words in the middle of which letter combinations like lya (ல்ய), jnya (ஞ்ய), nya (ந்ய), mya (ம்ய), vya (வ்ய), and mva (ம்வ) could occur. Not a single word of the kind referred to here is to be found in the whole range of the existing Tamil literature. In the *Kural*, a work of the first century A.D., it is not found. The period when such words were current might have been at least three centuries before the age of the *Kural*. Words like *Chamaithu* (சமைத்து), *Chambu* (சம்பு),

* *Studies in South Indian Jainism*, p. 39—Vizianagram College Publication I.

Chathukkam (சதுக்கம்), *Chanthi* (சந்தி), *Chalam* (சலம்), *Upam* (யூபம்), *Ukam* (யூகம்), *Yavanar* (யவனர்), which are grammatically inaccurate according to Tolkappiyar, are in common use in the Third Sangam works. Hence some time might have elapsed between the age of Tolkappiyar and that of the poets of the Third Academy. The third contury B.C. was probably the epoch marked by the introduction of Buddhism and Jainism into South India. There is no reference to the doctrines of Buddhism or Jainism in the whole of Tolkappiyam. On all these grounds, we shall not be far from the truth if we conclude that the age of the *Tolkappiyam* may not be assigned to a later period than the fourth century B. C.

Though the *Tolkappiyam* is now shown to have been a work possibly of the 4th century B. C., it is believed by some Tamil scholars like Mr. Senathi Raja

that it gives us a glimpse into the political and social condition of Southern India in pre-Aryan times (*i.e.,*) in those early times anterior to the advent of the Aryas into the South. It has already been stated that the date of the commencement of the Aryan colonisation of the South is the tenth century B. C. Since in the opinion of these writers certain portions of the *Tolkappiyam* refer to a period when Aryan influence was conspicuous by its absence in the south, the *Tolkappiyam* is conceived to picture for us the condition of South India as it was before 1000 B. C.*

What are the reasons for this bold, and confident assertion? The *Tolkappiyam* contains three books, each comprising nino chapters. The first book deals with Orthography. The second book deals with Etymology. The third book called *Porulathikaram* is the

* *The Tamilian Antiquary*, No. 5, p. 20.

grammar of matter. This is a special feature of Tamil unknown in any other language. *Porul* falls into two divisions *Ahapporul* and *Purapporul*. *Ahapporul* or conjugal love relates to domestic affairs, and Purapporul relates to state affairs. Thus the third book deals with love and war which in a primitive society were the only themes capable of arousing the enthusiasm of the poet or the strains of a bard. But why should Tolkappiyar include in a purely grammatical treatise the subject of *Porul* which does not fall within the scope of grammar in general? It is because in their opinion *Porul* is of Dravidian origin. Before *Agattiyam* and the *Tolkappiyam*, there existed a Tamil literature on *Porul*. Tolkappiyar, who found the customs of the Tamils different from those of the Aryans, wanted to leave accounts of them to posterity. So these writers conclude that the *Tolkappiyam* contains vestiges

of the Dravidian society in pre-Aryan times, and that it therefore constitutes an important source for our knowledge of the social and political organisation of the Dravidians prior to the 10th century B. C. But this view seems to be far-fetched, and betrays an utter want of the historic sense. Tolkappiyar nowhere states that he is portraying the condition of the Dravidian society as it was six hundred years before his own time, if our determination of his age be accepted at least as approximating to the truth.

Regarding the pre-historic period, it has already been shown how from the Vedic literature we could learn something about the political organisation of the Dravidian society. It has already been pointed out how the Southern Dravidians should have had chiefs who lived in fortresses, who could fight with bows and arrows, and how they had attained a

respectable level of civilization of their own. Beyond these few references, our knowledge, as regards the political organisation of the Dravidian society in the prehistoric period, is sadly defective.

Then passing on to the semi-historic period, we shall first of all study the probable village organisation of the Dravidian society. * The whole mass of villages as far as they are ancient in South India are of non-Aryan origin, since no considerable bodies of Aryans ever settled at all in these regions. The non-Aryan races had established villages for agricultural life before the Aryans. But the Dravidians of Southern India have been slowly changed in the course of ages by climatic conditions and by their absorption of some of the Aryan religious beliefs, practices, and customs. Consequently we do not expect to find their village and other customs

* Baden-Powell, *Village Communities in India*, p. 54.

actually primitive, but only showing some marks of their origin. There are places in Chutia Nagpur, Orissa, and elsewhere, where some Dravidian tribes have retained their original customs. The remarks of J. F. Hewitt and Baden-Powell who had exceptional opportunities of studying all about the remnants of the Dravidian races at these places enable us to infer as to what might have been the probable condition of the Dravidian society in the semi-historic period.

The Dravidians of South India were organised in tribes. The country traversed by the forest races of South India was, as the number of occupants increased, divided among a number of communities, to each of which a fixed area of territory was assigned by local custom. The boundaries of these were carefully defined, and each tribe pursued its avocations within its own limits. The different

settlements were separated by large expanses of forest and waste, within which they chose new camping grounds, when the soil round their original residences was exhausted. The men employed their time chiefly in hunting animals for food, while the women searched for vegetable food such as fruits, roots, and edible grass seeds. Among these women agriculture first originated in India. They secured yearly crops by sowing the seeds of the wild rice and coarse local millets. It was when this custom of sowing seeds had been established that the first attempt to change the encampment into a permanent village was undertaken. Huts were made of a few tree boughs stuck in the ground, and each settlement was only occupied, as long as the fertility of the soil lasted. They were usually placed on the higher slopes of hills. It was the forest races of South India that first founded the village com-

munities and provincial governments. The villages were originally the rude settlements of the nomad agriculturists of the forest races. The villages were in the first instance established by distributing or allotting the territory among the smaller groups, each led by its petty chief or chiefs who in turn allotted the land within the village for the holdings of the various families or persons entitled to be provided for. As time went on, new villages were constantly established one by one by small groups starting out on their own account into the abundant waste and clearing a new settlement independently of the movement of a whole clan or sept.

The unit of the Dravidian society was thus the village. In the ancient Dravidian village there was developed a compact tribal organisation under a more or less centralised government. There was a hierarchy of village officers who looked after

the equable distribution of land. 'There is an elaborate establishment of lots or holdings for the headman, the priest, the deputy or accountant, and a staff of artisans or menials. The village sacred tree or grove, the village deity, and the village dance or festival symbolise the unity of the village settlement; while a group of villages or tribal territorial divisions unites to form a larger territorial unit comprising from 10 to 100 villages—a confederacy meeting in assemblies to confer on any important matter that concerns several of the villages in common.' There are evidences of the regular institutions of Dravidian autonomous villages, unions of villages, and territorial divisions *.

In taking up for study *Tolkappiyam*, our next important source, we leave

* Vide Radha Kamal Mookerjee's article on *Indian Village Assemblies* in the Lucknow University Journal, Vol. I, No. 3, and J. F. Hewitt's *History and Chronology of the Mythmaking Age*.

behind us the region of hypothesis and conjecture for comparative certainty, and shall proceed to sketch in outline the structure of the Dravidian or Tamil society as gleaned from this great Tamil classic. There were five different communities scattered in different parts of the country and living apart by clans, each having its own tutelary deities and chiefs following its own customs and manner of living, such as *Marutamakkal* or agricultural tribes, *Kurunchimakkal* or semi-agricultural tribes, *Mullaimakkal* or pastoral tribes, *Neithal* or fishing tribes, and *Palaimakkal* or hunting tribes. Among the agricultural tribes the towns were called Ur, Perur (big village), and Mudur (old village). The chief of an agricultural tribe in ancient times was called Uran (lord of the village) or Kilavan (elder, owner). The semi-agricultural tribes living in hilly districts were known as Kuravar.

Their chief was known as Verpan or Chilampan. Their towns were modest clusters of huts called sirukudi (little huts). The pastoral tribes inhabited jungle tracts of land. They lived in villages called cheri (சேரி) and padi (பாடி). The men were called Ayar and Idaiyar. Their tribal drum was called pambai. The fishing tribes lived in villages called pattanam or pakkam. Their chiefs were known as Cherpan or Pulamban, Turaivan and Konkan, and the ordinary men were called Parathar and Nulaiyar. The tribes inhabiting desert tracts were known as Vedar. These were the nomads. They lived on hunting and plundering the adjoining countries. Their chiefs were Kalai and Vidalai. Their habitations were called Kurumbu, and their war drum was Tudi. The people were also called Maravar and Eyinar. * The pastoral tribes worshipped Vishnu; the

* *Tolkappiyam*, Porulathikaram, Sutra 5, Part 1, Vol. 1.

hill tribes worshipped the god Muruga; the fishing tribes worshipped the god Varuna; the agricultural tribes worshipped the god Indra. The nomads worshipped the goddess Kali.

It is surprising to note that these five different tribes enumerated above have continued to exist side by side for centuries, some of them even to the present day, with their characteristic habits and manners. We would not be far wrong if we imagine that these tribes might have existed unchanged even long before the *Tolkappiyam*. At any rate it is quite possible to infer that these existed long before Tamil, Málayalam, Telugu, and Canarese separated from the parent stock, and became differentiated into different dialects; because among the Canarese and Telugus, the same tribes, with almost the same names and occupations as those among the Tamils, may be found to exist even now.*

* *Ethnographical Survey of Mysore*—Mr. Nanjundayya M. A., M. L.

Thus there were five territorial divisions, such as hill (*Kurunchi*), plain (*Marutham*), the region between hill and plain (*Mullai*), sea-shore (*Neithal*), and waterless waste (*Palai*). Besides, the *Tolkappiyam* refers to four professional castes such as *Arasar* (Kshatriyas or Rulers), *Anthanar* or Parpar (Brahmans), Vanikar (Merchants), and Vellalar (Agriculturists). The duties of the four classes are thus described : * Learning, teaching, sacrificing, officiating at sacrifices, giving alms, and receiving alms, these belong to the Brahmans. Learning, sacrificing, giving alms, protecting the people, crushing the wicked, these are the functions of the king. Learning, sacrificing, giving alms, cultivation, tending cattle, and trade, these belong to the class of merchants. The Vellalas are divided into two classes, the higher and the lower.

* *Tolkappiyam*, Porulathikaram, Sutra 75.

The duties of the higher type of Vellalas are learning, sacrificing, giving alms, cultivating lands, tending cattle, and trade, while those of the lower type of Vellalas are learning, (excepting the vedas), giving alms, cultivating lands, tending cattle, trade, and services to others. Only certain duties were special to each class. Thus the special duties of a Brahman were to officiate at sacrifices and receive gifts; those of the king to protect the people and punish the wicked; those of the merchants and the higher Vellalas cultivation, trade, and the breeding of cattle; and those of the lower Vellalas services to others, trade, agriculture, and the breeding of cattle. The higher Vellalas and the merchant class had at first the same duties to perform, even though in actual practice each class specialised in one walk of life. The merchant class attended to commercial matters. The

attention of the higher Vellalas was absorbed by high matters of state. They could enter into vocations allotted to the upper three classes. Nachchinarkiniar states that Vellalas could give their girls in marriage to those of the kingly class, could serve in the army as commanders, and could become kings of the second class and be called '*Arasu*' and '*Vel*' (*Kurunilamannar*).† The Vellalas occupied a high position during the days of Tolkappiyar. In the words of Tiruvalluvar, the author of the *Kural*, they consituted the noble heritage of a nation. The Aryan theory that mankind is divided into four varnas, or groups of caste such as Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra was wholly foreign to the Southern Dravidians. Caste was non-existent. There is no reference to the term 'Sudra' in the whole of the *Tolkappiyam*. In the words of Mr. Manicka

† *Sen Tamil*, Vol 11, No. II, p. 366.

Naicker a transmutable, plastic, and barrierless professional distinction is all that is found in the work. The *Tolkappiyam's* fourth class can never be identified with the degraded North-Indian fourth class Sudra of any age. A caste system nearest to this can only be found in Dutt's Rig Vedic castes. Manu's compound castes cannot be gleaned the least in the *Tolkappiyam*.

True love among the ancient Tamils had two phases known as *Kalavu* or furtive love and *Karpu* or wedded love. Furtive love answers to what is known as courting among Europeans, the only difference being that courting may perhaps end in rejection which may be mutual or one-sided, whereas furtive love is real love between the champion and the dame unknown to the world at large. The discovery may bring about the wedding, or if frustrated bring about the voluntary death of both the parties, as

their love was chaste and dignified. This form of marriage that was in vogue among the Tamils corresponded to the Aryan Gandharva form of marriage. * 'It is the oldest and the best appreciated form of marriage among the ancient Tamils, as also the most natural way of effecting a life-long union, in which romance, free choice, karmic activities, and religion all mingle together in one harmonious whole. Mutual choice in a god-sent and casual meeting leads to private consortship, which sooner or later ends in the happy union of the parties with the consent of their parents.' The marriageable age of a boy was sixteen and that of a girl was twelve. Polygamy and prostitution were prevalent among the ancient Tamils. Slavery was not unknown. † Women did not accompany their husbands to the

* *Christian College Magazine*, Quarterly Series, Vol III, No 2 p. 95,—Mr. R. Rangachariar's article.

† *Tolkappiyam*, Porulathikaram, Sutra 23.

battle-field * nor would they accompany their husbands, if the latter went abroad for the acquisition of knowledge or riches. Women would not be allowed to accompany their husbands, whenever the latter undertook sea-voyages†. Men, who had to go abroad for the acquisition of knowledge, would not be away from their homes for more than three years.

‡ The people knew how to sculpture in stone. The references to the virakkal put up in honour of the departed heroes illustrate this point. If the people knew how to sculpture in stone, it may be presumed that they could have built palaces and temples and fortresses in stone. Unfortunately, these, if ever they existed, have all perished leaving not a trace behind.

So far, our sources of knowledge, if imperfect, have given us some material

* *Tolkappiyam*, Porulathikaram, Sutra 175.
† *Tolkappiyam*, Porulathikaram, Sutra 34.
‡ *Tolkappiyam*, Porulathikaram, Sutra 60.

to sketch the main outlines, however indistinct and shadowy, of the Dravidian society. Unhappily, when we turn to consider more closely the details of the political organisation proper, the evidence becomes painfully inadequate and disappointingly meagre. From the section on Purapporul in the *Tolkappiyam* we learn that the different tribes or clans were under the patriarchal rule of their chiefs who had fortified places and armies. The arms of the soldiers consisted of bows, arrows, swords, and javelins. The chiefs marched to battle to the sound of the tribal drums and flutes, and the standard bearers carried the flags or banners of the respective tribes, each of whom had a distinct banner. The soldiers had long hair which they tied into a knot on their heads, and the warriors wore different kinds of flowers on their *Kondai*, when going to or returning victorious from the

field of battle, and they wore anklets on their ankles which made a jingling sound when they marched to battle. Cattle-lifting was the beginning of warfare between two Tamil chiefs. The section dealing with cattle-lifting contains a graphic account of this practice. In a series of animated stanzas, the plan, progress, and results of the raid are vividly described under the title of *vetchiturai*, from the badge of *vetchi*, a plant worn by the leader and his men. The large numbers of virakkal that lie scattered profusely in different parts of the country testify to the prevalence of a practice like that of the cattle fighting so common on the borders between Scotland and England in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. * Elliot says: "As the exclusive constitution of an Indian village tends to isolate it from the cultivation of friendly relations with

* *Ind. Ant.* May 1897—W. Elliot's article.

its neighbours, it seems probable that the bolder spirits of one township might occasionally take advantage of a favourable opportunity to pounce upon the cattle of another especially among the communities which constitute the predatory classes." The examples of such cattle raids are not confined to adjoining villages, but are quite common to frontier villages of opposing states. Then open war breaks out leading to the systematic invasions of the raiders' territories. Then follows the siege. The war ends in victory for one of the parties. Sober counsel is given to the victor about the transitoriness of mundane enjoyments, when he becomes intoxicated with his own triumph in the war. It is also given to the defeated chieftain to suppress his grievance, to be calm and resigned without being overpowered by grief, and direct his thoughts about the life to come.

It should be borne in mind that the methods of warfare above sketched should have been in vogue not only among petty chiefs but also among the rulers of the Pandya, Chera, and Chola kingdoms. Tolkappiyar nowhere explicitly refers to the existence of these three well-known Tamil kingdoms. From this it is argued by certain scholars that the description in the *Tolkappiyam* carries us back to remote times, to the beginnings of the Dravidian society, to a semi-agricultural and nomadic state when the chief wealth of a tribe consisted of cattle, and when organised kingdoms had not been formed. To me this view seems to be untenable. For want of a better source of information, grammatical works like the *Tolkappiyam* have to be laid under contribution by those intent upon the elucidation of the forgotten history of ancient South India. Tolkappiyar need not have made explicit references to

the Tamil kingdoms notwithstanding their existence as well-organised kingdoms in his own age, since he was bringing out a purely grammatical treatise of the Tamil language and not a monograph on the political history of the Tamil country. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, Asoka's Rock Edicts, Sinhalese traditions, the *Periplus*, Ptolemy's *Geography*, Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsu*, all these eloquently testify to the prevalence of flourishing, vigorous, and independent monarchies in the Tamil country. If the traditions and the different lists of the Pandyan dynasty and the *Halasya Mahatmya* of the *Skandapurana* which gives an account of the sports or miracles of Sundaresvara were investigated without prejudice, the truth will certainly dawn upon any eager inquirer that the origin of the Pandyan dynasty should be sought somewhere about the fifth century B. C., or even

earlier. In making this statement I am not indulging in any vague generalisations, and I am confident that one day this statement will meet with universal assent. This view was expressed long ago by Wilson.* † The ancient history of the Chola kingdom commences at the same time as that of the Pandyan. It can be safely asserted that the Chera kingdom, which is always enumerated along with the Pandya and Chola states by original authorities, had as high an antiquity as the Pandya and the Chola.

We shall now proceed to describe the genesis of the monarchy in South India. We have before referred to the existence of five different tribes with their elders or chiefs. These chiefs by the conquest of neighbouring territory and the absorption of adjacent tribes

* Wilson's *Catalogue of the Mackenzie Mss*. p. 46.

† *Ibid*, p. 49.

would have developed in course of time into great rulers of organised kingdoms. We may note that when nomad communities settle down to agriculture, the old men of these communities would become the acknowledged heads, and begin to exercise at first a patriarchal authority over them. With the increase of the family, this power augments, and they become chieftains. The first of the Pandyans seems to have been one of those patriarchs of an agricultural community who by conquering some of the adjoining tribes had become a sovereign. This was probably also the process by which the other kingdoms such as the Chola and the Chera might have come into being.

It is possible to notice but a few stray references to the polity of these kingdoms. Kapatapuram,* the capital of

* *Tamilian Antiquary*, No. 7—M. Rahaviengar's Article on *Valmiki and South India.*

the Pandyas, was golden, beautiful, adorned with pearls, and worthy of the Pandyas. The Pandyas were crowned by Agastya, the priest of the Pandyas. *It may be inferred from the *Indica* of Megasthenes that the Pandya Queen had 500 elephants, a force of cavalry 4000 strong, and another of infantry consisting of about 130,000 men. † Owing to the moral influence of Asoka, the monarchs of the Chola, Pandya, Satyaputra, and Keralaputra kingdoms made arrangements in their respective kingdoms for the caring of the sick, both of men and cattle. Besides, they caused wells to be dug, and trees and useful healing herbs to be planted on the roads for the benefit of men and cattle. Though the credit for this beneficent measure is attributed to Asoka in his Girnar Edict, it is only reasonable to suppose that the above mentioned arrangements could not

* *Ind. Ant.* Vol. 1876, p. 89.

† *Ind. Ant.* Vol. 1876, p. 272—Girnar Inscription of Asoka.

have been introduced by Asoka's will into those independent kingdoms of the South; but only by the rulers of those states themselves. Pliny mentions a tribe called Pandaea (Pandyas) who alone of the Indians were in the habit of having female sovereigns. Megasthenes says, 'Heracles begot a daughter in India whom he called Pandaea. To her he assigned that portion of India which lies to the southward and extends to the sea; while he distributed the territory subject to her rule into 365 villages giving orders that one village should each day bring to the treasury the royal tribute, so that the queen might always have the assistance of those men whose turn it was to pay the tribute in coercing those who for the time being were defaulters in their payments'. The division of the territory into 365 villages or revenue units is an indication of the civil division of the Pandya Kingdom during the centuries anterior to the

Christian era. It has already been stated how Pandaea possessed a great treasure in the fishery for pearls which were highly valued by the Greeks and the Romans. The Pandya rulers were great patrons of literature. The first two Madura Academies, if their very existence is not to be questioned at all, should be assigned to the centuries preceding the Christian era, and so the Pandya rulers during the centuries preceding the Christian era should have presided over these Academies, and done not a little to promote the cause of sound learning and culture. The scanty materials that are available do not throw even this feeble light upon the condition of the other Tamil kingdoms of the south.

Having sketched, though in feeble and indistinct outlines, the system of polity as it obtained currency in the semi-historic period, we shall now pass on to a description of the ancient

South Indian polity as it was in the historic period, a most remarkable, but none the less forgotten, period of its development. The early centuries of the Christian era form an important landmark in the development of political institutions of the peoples of Peninsular India. Happily the numerous Tamil classical works of the epoch of the Third Sangam furnish the means of describing in outline some features at least of the polity, existing at the time, of the Tamil kingdoms, such as the social system, the fiscal system, the administrative system, the legal system, with some view of commerce, and religion. It is also possible to deal with the political thought of ancient South India during the early centuries of the Christian era as exhibited in ancient Sangam works, and to present a picture, however dim and shadowy, of the state and its duties during the period under review.

It may also be unhesitatingly affirmed that the political organisation portrayed in these Sangam works was not simply an ideal sought after by the thinkers and writers of the day but also an actual achievement. That there was phenomenal progress achieved in the field of polity, that the government in that distant age was not an undiluted, unmitigated despotism, but was subject to checks and counter-checks, that the ancient monarch carried on the government in consonance with high ideals and lofty principles, that he invariably sought the advice of a council of elders and certain popular assemblies, and that he had a great regard for public opinion which reigned as supreme as the law guarded by himself, these indisputable facts will, it is hoped, be apparent from a perusal of the following pages.

In the *Perumpanarruppadai*, a fine description of the Brahmans' quarters at a village in Tondai-nadu is thus

given:—'The healthy calf tied to one of the posts in the pandal indicates that its mother the cow went out to the meadow.' The milk-yielding cow was an indispensable animal in the house of a Brahman; for the five-fold products from the cow were essential for vedic rites as they are even at present. Why the hen and the dog are mentioned is inexplicable.' The reference to the teaching of vedic slokas to the parrots with aquiline bills by Brahmans is evidently an exaggeration. The Brahman wife was a paragon of chastity like the tiny star (near one of the seven stars known as the constellation of the Great Bear) in the northern horizon. She was an accomplished cook being well-versed in the preparation of highly relishing vegetarian diet. A particular kind of rice interpreted as *irasannam* (இரசான்னம்) by the commentator was the staple food in the house. In the

Brahman villages only the vegetarian diet was available, but it was prepared in a highly relishing manner. The Brahman was noted for his cleanliness and religious austerities. He would readily feed with pleasure even low-caste minstrels.

Classes of Society

The *Tirumurugarrupadai* gives a true picture of the Brahmans of the classic age. The Brahman should be born of a father and a mother sprung of totally different gotras of unsullied reputation such as Kasyapa. He should observe bachelorhood for forty-eight years in strict accordance with the Vedas; he should rear the three kinds of sacred fires; he is twice born, the first birth being his natural birth and the second being the one he assumes during the holy thread ceremony; he should wear a holy thread of nine strings; when worshipping God Muruga, he should be in wet attire

dripping water; his raised hands should rest on his head and his mouth should devoutly mutter gently the six mystic syllables of Muruga's name.

The Sages conducted *yagas* or holy sacrifices. 'They were the most honoured among the pure Tamils. They professed to know the three stages of time, that is, the past, present, and future. They led a retired and religious life, dwelling outside the great towns.' The Vaisyas constituted the trading class. Their virtues strike the reader with admiration. These traders were virtuous, and helped in the propagation of virtue among other classes. By their advice, flesh-eaters became vegetarian, and robbers and thieves gave up their ignoble calling. In strict conformity with the injunctions laid down in the Vedas, they worshipped the celestial beings (Devas), and conducted holy sacrifices. They manifested boundless grace to-

wards cows and bulls. They maintained the dignity of the Brahmans, and performed charities in the name of those who could not afford to do them, so that they may reap the consequent blessings. They sumptuously fed the hungry. Traders, though they were, they spoke only the naked and unadorned truth. In making bargains, they carefully avoided all sorts of illegitimate gain. They made a clean breast of the net profit they made by their dealings. Agriculture was practised by the Vellalas. From the higher kind of Vellalas, the major and the minor dynasties of kings were chosen. Next in rank to the Vellalas were the shepherds and huntsmen. Below these were the artisans such as goldsmiths, carpenters, potters, etc. After these came the military class(*i.e.*,) the Padaiachchier or the armed men. Last of all were the Valayar and Pulayar or the fishermen and scavengers respec-

tively. The distinction of the four castes Brahma, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra observed by the Aryas did not exist among the Tamils. The expression "twice-born" applied by the Aryans to those who were sanctified by the investiture of the sacred thread, was always used in ancient Tamil literature to denote only the Brahmans, and it is evident therefore that the Kshatriya and the Vaisya who wore the sacred thread were not known in *Tamilakam*.

Strong-bodied mlechchas beautify their bodies with garlands, get drunk with fermenting toddy, and wander with mirth riotously everywhere in the streets of large cities like Madura. Innocent damsels at sunset light oily wicks in the lamps, and adore the household deities with flowers and paddy grains. In the guarded houses of the rich, servant boys are busy in preparing pastes of musk upon the black mortars.

There were halls with flags for discussions between disputing philosophers. There were the residences of sages and penancing devotees. The business of entertainment should have provided a livelihood for different classes of persons such as dancers. There is a reference to dancing maids who press their lutes tight to their warm bosoms to heat the strings at sunset in winter, and tune their chords to suit admirably to their dance. There were charity-houses wherein the poor and the needy were fed. The *conji* flew out in streams, which were rendered miry by bulls fighting with one another. The ceaselessly plying cars rendered the mire into dust which rose up, and spoiled the paintings in the adjoining temples. There were charity-houses for feeding stray cattle.

The classic age was characterised by a sad feature; people other than

Brahmans were addicted to drink, gluttony, and flesh-eating; there seemed to have been no sumptuous dinner without these vices. The minstrel who was directed to the king for receiving a fit reward was encouraged by the hope of sumptuous flesh diet throughout his long way from the different peoples. Vegetarianism was in fact a later growth. No doubt there should have been honourable exceptions among the Saivas and the Jains in those days.

Rice was pounded with long pestles bordered with strong iron rings; these rings by constant employment underwent much wear and tear, and became blunt and smooth. This custom is still in vogue. *Maduraikkanchi* tells us that clothes were washed in sour rice-water, and ironed as is the custom even at the present day in remote villages. In certain houses monkeys were brought up like children; young monkeys and

children played together. Elephants were trained in a northern language by lads of the Tamil race. In the *Chintamani* one of the Five Ancient Tamil Epics, this practice is referred to. Elephants were fed with rice smeared well in ghee by keepers. The Dravidians used to catch wild elephants in pitfalls dug in the woods: but the Aryas introduced the ingenious method of decoying wild elephants by tame female elephants.

ORACLES

From *Mullaippattu* we learn that there were oracles at the shrine of *Korravai* which used to be consulted by the people on emergencies. When the king was about to go on a war-like expedition, the queen was disconsolate. Old matrons in attendance upon the queen consulted the oracle, and informed her that the king would return triumphant. Then the queen consented to the king's departure. In every large city, at sunset, the dames

hastened to prepare garlands. Maravas got drunk, and wandered riotously in the streets. Hypnotic dances of *velan*, the dances of females, religious festivities, and musical entertainments could be witnessed everywhere.

Puhar was a thriving port in the classical age. It was famous enough to count among its inhabitants men of different nationalities that had resorted to it probably on trade business or for amassing fortune. The bazaar thoroughfare was the scene of unceasing festivals. There were arrays of flags on either side of the bazaar road. In the bazaar in Madura, flags of beauty used to be raised in honour of divine festivals. Besides, there were flags to commemorate the capture of foreign cities by the generals of the king. Flags in honour of triumphs in war waved majestically like cataracts flowing down the hills. Elephants, cars

drawn by brilliant horses, magnificent chargers mounted by trained riders passed and repassed through the bazaar thoroughfare. In the bazaar were to be seen pedlars, sellers of petty articles of merchandise such as fragrant unknit flowers, garlands of variegated colours, perfumed powders manufactured by the joint work of several persons who had divided the labour betwen themselves, betel leaves, spiced arecanuts, and lime slaked from burnt shells. There were the manufacturers of bangles from conches, goldsmiths, cloth merchants, painters, weavers offering their clothes for sale, and sellers of vegetables. Customs were levied at all the sea-ports. Tolls were collected on the trunk-roads used by caravans and at the frontier of each kingdom. We have already referred in detail to the commercial activity of this epoch. The state of society corresponding to this activity of trade, to

the traffic on high roads, the bustle at frontiers, customs-houses, tolls, and to the minute regulation of these must have been one of considerable complexity. Naturally there should have been a considerable growth of luxury consequent upon the rise of the Tamil kingdoms like the Chola and the Pandya to pre-eminence in the South. Foreign influences also began to assert themselves. There should have taken place a considerable advance in art during this period. Machines were constructed, and great architectural works were carried out under the supervision of the Yavanas. From *Nedunalvadai* we learn that these Yavanas were excellent artists versed in the construction of metal statues, and apparently the Tamils should have learnt this art from them. 'The dress worn by the Tamil people varied according to their rank in society and the race to which they

belonged. The Brahmans cropped their hair leaving a small tuft on the top of the head. The soldiers employed to guard the public thoroughfares and the servants in the king's palace wore coats. A full dress was the outward sign of a servant rather than of a master. Women mixed freely in the business and amusements of social life. From the queen downwards, every woman visited the temples. Owing to the freedom enjoyed by women it was possible for young people to court each other before marriage. One most curious custom referred to in the Sangam works is that of a disappointed lover proclaiming his love in the public streets and committing suicide. Every town and village had its street of harlots, and in the great cities there were educated courtezans. The courtezans honoured by the special regard of the king were allowed to travel in carriages or palanquins, to visit the royal parks,

and to use betel boxes made of gold. Boys were considered marriageable at sixteen and girls at twelve years of age. The science and practice of the fine arts were highly developed among the ancient Tamils. The study of music was an essential part of a liberal education. Dancing was cultivated as a fine art, and there were text-books already composed, in which rules were given in detail for the performance of the several kinds of dancing then in vogue. In the arts of painting and sculpture, the Tamils had acquired a considerable degree of proficiency. Figures of gods, men, and animals were painted with a variety of colours on the walls of private houses and public buildings such as temples and palaces. All the villages and towns were fortified against the attacks of robbers and enemies'.*

* Extracts from V. Kanakasabhai Pillai's *The Tamils 1800 Years Ago*, pp. 116-130.

We shall now proceed to sketch briefly the religion of the Tamils in the early centuries of the Christian era. But since an idea of the religious development of the Tamil people in the centuries anterior to the Christian era forms a *sine qua non* for a proper comprehension of the religious progress attained by the Tamils in the historic period, we take a bird's eye-view of the history of religion and philosophy of the Southern Dravidians from the earliest times.

The literature of the Tamils constitutes one of our important sources for a sketch of their religious history. Prof. Max Muller in his monumental work, *The Six Systems of Philosophy*, wrote :—' In the South of India, there exists a philosophical literature which, though it may show clear traces of Sanskrit influence, contains also original indigenous elements of great beauty and of great importance for historical

purposes.' According to Dr. Pope, Tamil possesses rare and original elements in ethics. Therefore a study of Tamil religion and literature will enable us to draw a sketch of the main lines of development of the religion of the Tamils. According to the late Prof. Seshagiri Sastriar, while the early part of the Hindu religion is based upon the Vedas, Smritis, and the Agamas, its later part owes its origin to the customs, manners, and religions of Southern India, and is founded on the Tamil literature. The above statements only confirm us in our view that the religion of the south should have had an independent existence in the beginning, though subject to Aryan influences in later times.

The progress of Tamil civilization from its primitive rude restlessness and wild aggressive valour to its ordered sense of humanity and exalted moral and religious aims of a later day is undoubtedly

the result of the operation of diverse momentous influences, the chief ones of which have naturally been religious in origin and character. In the early stages of civilization nothing acts so powerfully as religion in stimulating and sustaining progress in human communities. There was a period lost in hoary antiquity when the indigenous Dravidian religion with its peculiar forms of sacrifices, prophesies, and frenzied dances, dimly visible still in *Veriyattu*, *Velan Adal*, and other ceremonies of mountain races, was alone in vogue. It is said that the Dravidians were worshipping devils, and that they were tree-worshippers and serpent-worshippers. Their religion is said to have consisted largely in magical superstition and demonolatry. But there are good reasons to believe that even in this pre-historic period there might have taken place considerable development in

the religious ideas and beliefs of the Dravidian people. The war-like Tamils owing to the tropical climate became soon enervated, and attained mental calm and powers of deep thinking. They were not given to the practice of idol worship. They had a religion suited to their ancient civilization. While they might have worshipped deities like Korravai and Muruga, and those corresponding to Varuna, Tvashta, Indra, and Krishna, at the same time they had belief in the existence of one Supreme Being. Scholars like Dr. Pope believe that in the pre-historic period the native Dravidian religion was a kind of Saivism. Wheeler says, 'Siva was a mystic deity of Turanian origin, and was represented as half-intoxicated with drugs, and associated with ideas of death and reproduction'. Dr. Stevenson holds that Siva was the Tamilian God, and was worshipped in two forms, one as a

spiritual object of meditation and the other as a material symbol or *linga* to represent the invisible to tha visible eyes. Adoring God with flower and incense was an ancient practice prevalent among the Tamils. Flower represents the heart, and incense the melting of it. It is said of Ravana that he was a staunch votary of *linga*, and carried always with him a golden *linga* which he worshipped with incense and flowers. Ravana and Vali were great devotees of Siva. That Siva was a name that the Tamils had learnt to use for the Deity may receive confirmation from other evidences. Agathiyar is said to have learnt Tamil, the language of the South, from Siva. From this it may be inferred that Siva was a Dravidian deity. To the Tamil every hill-top is sacred to the gods. Siva, the lord of the Dravidians, was according to Dr. Oppert a *Malai-Arasan* (Mountain chief). Siva came to be known in later times

as *Dakshinamurthy* (*i.e.*) the God of the South. The Agamas, which are said to be of Tamilian origin and which form the basis of the *Saiva Siddhanta* philosophy, 'the choicest product of the Dravidian intellect', are said to have been proclaimed at Mahendra, one of the peaks in the Western Ghats, South of the Pothiya hills, lying between Tinnevelly and Travancore. Manickavachakar addresses God Siva as 'மந்திரமாமலை மகேந்திர வெற்பன்' (*i.e.*) the lord of the Mahendra Hill—the mountain of mystic utterance, and as 'தென்பாண்டி நாட்டான்' (*i.e.*) dweller in the southern Pandya land. Siva is said to have been one of the members of the First Madura Academy. The original indigenous Tamil word for God is *Kadavul* which means that which is beyond the reach of the mind or the final conclusion arrived at by the mind. If side by side with a belief in the existence of one Supreme Being was also found the worship

of demons and serpents, there is nothing incompatible between the two. For we know how in the present day the grossest fetishism exists side by side with the most abstruse systems of philosophy in India. The Tamilians at this early period might have had a philosophy of their own. Prof. Macdonald says, 'The doctrine of Transmigration is entirely absent from the Vedas and the early Brahmanas. It seems probable that the Indian Aryas borrowed the idea in a rudimentary form from the aborigines', (*i.e.*) most probably from the Dravidians. We learn from the Vedic literature that the Aryan worship of natural phenomena and their sacrifices appeared to the Dravidian mind to be sacrilegious. The deities of the Aryans were treated with contempt, and the sacrifices were checked, whenever and wherever they were found to be performed by the Aryas.

Regarding the conception of Siva and its growth from Vedic times among the Aryan peoples, scholars love to tell us that Rudra was nowhere called Siva in the *Rig Veda*, and that he merely represented the storm god, with his thunder, lightning, and the rains, rushing down from the snow-capped hills. Dr. Stevenson was the first to point out that Siva is not named at all in the ancient hymns of the Vedas. Although Rudra could be identified with Agni, Agni and Rudra could not be identified with Siva; for Daksha is said not to have invited Siva to his sacrifice, though all the eleven Rudras were present with him.

The first foreign influence brought to bear upon the Dravidian religion was that of this Vedic religion. What takes place, when two different cults and civilizations, not wholly irreconcilable, are brought face to face with each other,

took place in South India when the Northern Aryan with his vigorous and attractive religion and philosophy attempted to impose this system on the Southern Dravidian who had an indigenous religion and philosophy of his own. The Vedic religion with its usual spirit of toleration and compromise would have adopted and modified the practices then found current in the country. The Dravidian heroes, gods, and minor deities were then identified with the Vedic deities of the Brahmans, and a fusion should have taken place between the two religions. Of course it must be borne in mind that for a long time the foreign influence upon the Dravidian religion was anything but strong, but it accumulated as time elapsed, and 'some traces of this foreign influence may be observed in such fragments of the pre-Tolkappiyam works as now and then turn up in old commentaries'. One nation

does not lose credit by exporting its superfluous products and importing other useful ones. One religion loses no merit by borrowing from another. A progressive nation cannot but absorb and assimilate foreign thoughts and foreign ideas. The infusion of fresh blood adds energy and vigour, and richness and depth. Currents of water flow with greater life and glow than stagnant pools. Therefore it is no discredit to the Tamils that they should have borrowed certain of the finer religious elements of the Indo-Aryans.

Saivism, the native Dravidian religion of the South, fell under northern influences, and those who introduced the Vedic religion into the Dravida-desa found a place in their own system for this Saivism. The Vedic god of storms and tempests, Rudra, was singled out by the Dravidians as especially their God, and his words attributed to, and designations

adopted for, their old God Siva. The attributes and rites of this deity were gradually brought into conformity by a process of compromise with those of some Aryan deity or deities such as Rudra. *"This was due to the necessity under which the Aryan colonists of India lay of compromising with the people among whom they settled. The Dravidian religious conceptions reacted on Aryan modes of thought. The attributes of the Dravidian deity, Siva, were found to be most in conformity with those of the Vedic god, Rudra, the wielder of the thunder-bolt and father of the storm gods. The conception thus grew of a half-Dravidian, half-Aryan, deity, Rudra, who became the Supreme Deity, Siva, of the great mass of the Dravidians." When the non-Aryan gods found a place in the Aryan pantheon, the

* *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.*—Prof. R. W. Frazer on 'the Southern Dravidians'.

inclusion was symbolised by the Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva—Brahma standing for the ancient tradition, exclusive externalism; Vishnu for the transition when the original Vedic Sun-god became humanised, and emerged from the rigid enclosure of scriptural texts into the world of the living human heart; and Siva for the period when the non-Aryans found their entrance into the social organisation of the Aryan. We know that Rudra among the Aryans slowly grew into the Siva of the Hindu Triad. It is easy to trace how in the person of Rudra is slowly built up the conception of the various Vedic deities, Indra and Agni, Varuna and Vayu, Surya and Soma, Vishnu and Brahma, and of the Dravidian Siva. By the time the Vedas were arranged into Rig, Yajur, Saman, and Atharvan, Rudra's position as the God of gods had become assured. By the time of the earliest Upanishads,

the worship of Rudra-Siva supplanted the worship of the Vedic deities.

A word may be said about the different aspects of Siva. As the idea of Rudra was fully evolved, in Him were also centralised the various aspects of Nature as good and bad, and awful and beneficent. "The Brahmans", according to Lord Sri Krishna, "know two bodies of this God, one awful, and one auspicious. From His being Lord and great, He is called Mahesvara. Since He consumes, since He is fiery, fierce, an eater of flesh, He is called Rudra. As He preserves the vast universe, He is called Mahadeva. Since He constantly prospers all men in all their acts seeking their welfare (Siva), He is therefore called Siva.*". And in this we see Him not only as the destroyer, but as the Reproducer and Preserver, and as such the conception of Siva transcends the conception of Rudra as

* *Vide Anusasana Parva, Mahabharata.*

one of the Trinity. Wheeler says, 'The ancient Rudra-Siva is alternately fierce and beneficent; according to the philosophy, He is the cause of the creation and dissolution of the universe,' and His early name *Pasupati* is a reminiscence of the ancient practice of offering human beings like cattle in sacrifice to the fierce deity. In spite of Siva's entry amongst the Aryan gods, his Aryan and non-Aryan aspects remained different. 'In the former, He is the lord of ascetics, who having conquered desire is rapt in the bliss of Nirvana, as bare of raiment as of worldly ties. In the latter He is terrible, clad in raw bleeding elephant hide, intoxicated by the hemp decoction. In the former he is the replica of the Buddha, and as such has captured many a Buddhist shrine; in the latter He is the overlord of demons, spirits, and other dreadful beings, who haunt the places of the dead, and as such has appropriated

to Himself the worshippers of the *phallus* and of snakes, trees, and other totems. In the former He is worshipped in the quietude of meditation; in the latter in frenzied orgies of self-torture'. Though this picture of the Non-Aryan aspect of Siva is portrayed in somewhat exaggerated and lurid colours, and though some of the finer aspects of the Dravidian Saivism are ignored, nevertheless the fact of the existence of two aspects of Siva, Aryan and Non-Aryan, receives pointed emphasis in this statement of Dr. Tagore in the *Viswa Bharati Quarterly*. But in spite of all that was achieved, it was quite impossible even for the Aryan genius to bring into harmony with itself and assimilate each and every one of the practices, beliefs, and myths of innumerable non-Aryan tribes. More and more of what was non-Aryan came to be not merely tolerated but welcomed,

as the non-Aryan element became increasingly predominant in the race mixture.

The worship of Skanda affords an instance of the fusion of the northern and southern religions. Skanda or Kumara is one of the sons of Siva. Being supposed to have been brought up by the six mothers, the Krittikas (Pleiades), he is known as Shanmatura and Karttikeya. The puranas state that he was born of the fiery energy of Siva in a forest of grass, became the commander of the army of the gods in their battle against the giant, Taraka, and that he rent asunder by his arrows the mountain, Krauncha. Skanda is known by the name of Subramanya in the Tantras. There exists an intimate connection between the worship of Subramanya and that of the serpent. The common name Subba or Subbaroya found among the Telugu, Canarese, and Tamil people is

explained to be both a contraction of Subramanya and a synonym for serpent. The sixth day of a lunar month (Shashti) is held as peculiarly sacred to Subramanya as to the serpent-god. His riding on a peacock, His marriage with the forest maid, Valliyamman, and the fact that His most famous temples are on hill tops show that He is connected with the ancient tree-and-serpent-worship and the sylvan deities. In South India, the worship of Skanda-Kumara under the names, Velayudha and Muruga, is most popular. According to the Tamilian traditions, Muruga, the Tamil God of War, was the son of the terrible Korravai (the victorious matron). He was also regarded as the child of Kadukilal (பழையோள் = the ancient lady). Korravai and Kadukilal were incorporated into the Aryan mythology as the Goddess Uma, and Korravai's son Muruga was absorbed into the Aryan

system as Subramaṇya, the son of Uma. He is par excellence the God of youth, of energy, and of virility.* The god has been included in Aryan theogony from early ages. In the *Tolkappiyam*, Muruga is described as *Seyon* (சேயோன்) *i. e.* the son of Siva. He may therefore be regarded as the outcome of the fusion of the ancient Aryan and Dravidian cults.

The *Tolkappiyam* refers to the presiding deities of the various divisions of the Tamil country such as Indra, Vishnu, Muruga, and Kali. It also refers to *Valli*, *Kodinilai*, and *Kanthali*.† *Valli* stands for the moon, *Kodinilai* represents the Sun, while *Kanthali* signifies *Kadavul*, *i. e.* that power which exists without support, and which transcends all the *Tattvas* (ஒரு பற்றுக்கோடின்றி அருவாகித்தானே நிற்குந் தத்

* *Vide South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*—H. Krishna Sastri.

† *Tolkappiyam*, Poruladhikaram, Sutra 88.

துவங்கடந்த பொருள்). The *Tattvas*, according to the late lamented scholar, J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, form, as it were, different coats or vestures, of different textures at different times and at different stages, to the soul undergoing evolution with intent to rid itself of its coil (Anava) in strict accordance with the Law of Karma, and the Supreme Being being devoid of these vestures is usually addressed as 'Tattvatita', 'beyond the *Tattvas*'. In fact, the very term Kadavul connotes a transcendental (*kada*, கட) God who is at the same time immanent in the universe (*vul*, உள்). Tolkappiyar speaks of God as formless, joyful, and omnipresent. The Dravidians had a clear conception of the nature of God. During this epoch, the Dravidians possessed the knowledge of the Supreme Deity, the Creator of the Universe. In the realm of philosophy, the Tamils occupy a great place among the Indian races. The *Meyppattiyal* (மெய்ப்

பாட்டியல்), a chapter in the *Tolkappiyam*, is a scientific psychology, and the '*Ahapporul* in the *Tolkappiyam* is said to have an undercurrent of sublime truth which, when interpreted, marks the different stages through which the human soul passes, ere it attains final absorption into the Supreme Being. If this theory be true, we require no stronger proof for regarding the non-dualistic philosophy as the essential doctrine of the Tamilian religion and the path of love as that pointed out by the Tamilian saints. *Purapporul* also makes a passing reference to principles of asceticism, and means of salvation.'* During the age of the *Tolkappiyam*, the Southern Dravidians adopted a few of the social institutions, myths, and ceremonies of the Aryan settlers; but, in the opinion of the late lamented Prof. Sundaram Pillai, it was even then only an adaptation and no copy.

* S. Anavaratavinayakam Pillai's article, p. 71, Vol. IV *the Siddhanta Dipika.*

In the next century (*i.e.*) the third century B. C., Buddhism was introduced into South India by Asoka. The early history of Buddhism in the Tamil country is obscure, though there are frequent references to Buddhism in early Tamil literature. It is reasonable to suppose that Asoka's Buddhist missionaries to Ceylon passed through the Tamil country, and even attempted to propagate the Buddhist creed there in spite of the *Mahavamsa* which says that they flew in the air, and arrived in Ceylon. Buddhism exercised an important influence on the development of the Tamilian religion. The appeal to the free-will of mankind, by which each individual was summoned to take into his own hands his fate in his next existence and even to free himself altogether from the pains of existence itself, and which was addressed to every one without exception of rank, caste, or even sex, did not fail

to awaken and stimulate the powers of all classes of the Tamil society.

At about the same epoch as that of the introduction of Buddhism, Jainism was introduced into South India. The work of propagating the Jain faith into Peninsular India was undertaken by the disciples of Bhadrabahu, a contemporary of Chandragupta Maurya. One of these disciples known as Visakhamuni came to the Pandya and the Chola kingdoms, and preached the Jaina moral code to the Tamils of these kingdoms.

We now pass on to a description of the religious condition of the Tamils in the early centuries of the Christian era. Valluvar's religion is the religion of the Dravidians. Valluvar systematised the ethics of the Dravidian community, and as well built up a system for them. His system is a high-water mark of excellence. He is a utilitarian of the noblest type and a thinker of the loftiest order.

His conception of the good of the community and the law of service enjoined upon the member of that community to contribute to that good is well conceived. In the chapter on *Oppuravarithal* (ஒப்புறவறிதல்) in his sacred *Kural*, Valluvar, the ablest exponent of the Dravidian religion and philosophy, formulates the most comprehensive and far-reaching ideal of service to the good of the community or nation. In the thought-region, Valluvar is a prodigy and a type of Dravidian intellect, nothing short of meteoric. In the opening chapter of the *Kural*, a perfect ethical and religious code, the God-head is described as the first and indivisible, the supremely wise, the heart-dweller, the sense-destroyer, the passionless, the incomparable, the good, and the possessor of right noble attributes. Valluvar's creed is not a godless creed. His God is the first cause and lord. He is intelligent. He is immaculate, untainted

by likes and dislikes. He is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. He is the source of all Dharma and Beneficence. He has eight attributes. Valluvar describes God by the terms *Chemporul* (செம்பொருள் = Good being), *Ullathu* (உள்ளது = The Existent), *Meypporul* (மெய்ப் பொருள் = True Being). According to Valluvar, 'no amount of learning is of any good, unless a man believes in the existence of God, and worships His Feet in all love and truth.' The references to the deities Indra, Vishnu, Siva, Lakshmi, and Brahma would seem to argue Valluvar's faith in symbology, despite his alleged aloofness from particular creeds.*

The deities of the Sangam period, as seen from the other works of this age, were Siva of the dark throat, Baladeva of white colour, Krishna of the deep blue

* *Vide Kural*—Stanzas 898, 610, 580, 617, and 1062.

colour, and Subramanya, the Red One. In Puhar and Madura, there were temples dedicated in honour of these deities as well as of Indra. One of the oldest of South Indian shrines is devoted to the worship of Krishna. The Sangam literature affords abundant evidence to show the supremacy of Siva. The latter is given the front place among the gods in *Maduraikkanchi*. In all the introductory invocations of the Sangam works, Siva's form and grace are dealt with. There are many references to the worship of Siva throughout the *Purananuru*. God Subramanya was a great favourite deity with the Tamils. He resided with splendour in his six favourite places such as Tirupparamkunram, Tiruchendur, Palani, Tiruverakam, Alagar Koil, and Kunrutoradal. There should have been shrines dedicated to Subramanya in these places. The Tamil God Muruga was the common object of worship to the Aryans

and the Tamils. The poem *Tirumurugarruppadai* clearly shows the readiness with which the Aryans incorporated the traditions and religious beliefs of the Tamils. God Subramanya condescends to accept the obeisance of mortals to him in whatever form it may be given. Bloody sacrifices were offered by the people in villages to this deity. Sacrifices of sheep were offered to the God. Hypnotic dances were in vogue in honour of the God. The rudiments of Vaishnavism are also traceable in the Sangam works. In this body of literature there are references to Rama and Krishna. Besides the cult of Siva, the cult of Vishnu also was coming into prominence. Much importance was attached to sacrifices. The *Vedic* learning was much esteemed.

An interesting account of Buddhism is given in the classical work, *Manimekhalai*. The chief problem that confronted the

Buddhists was 'How to get freed from birth which is unmixed pain.' The solution they arrived at may be expressed in the words of the *Manimekhalai* thus: 'The born are doomed to ever-increasing pain, those who will not be born are blessed with eternal beatitude. Of attachment the former is an outcome and by renunciation the latter is doomed.' The *Manimekhalai* contains references only to the Mahayana form of Buddhism. The fabric of Buddha's teachings rests on the foundation of the four Satyas. "The ever-increasing misery by attachment is caused, the happiness of emancipation by non-attachment secured. These conjointly form the 'Four Principles of Truth.'" The lines of the *Manimekhalai* that deal with the origin of misery are almost taken verbatim from the Buddhistic Text, the *Tripitaka*: "Of ignorance are actions the result, and from actions knowledge proceeds. Know-

ledge gives rise to name and form, and they in turn to the five organs of sense and the mind. These organs six, of contact with things, are the cause. On contact depending, experience comes. Of experience desire is the outcome. And desire to attachment gives rise. Attachment, of an aggregate of actions, is the root. On this aggregate based all birth proceeds; with birth, old age, disease and death, pain and weeping, suffering and care, and despair, all the fruits of actions. Thus is said the origin of misery." The means of obtaining freedom from misery is then described: "With ignorance departs actions all; with actions, the knowledge that differentiates. When knowledge departs, names and forms along. Names and forms departing, the organs six are no more. With the organs six, the contact with things does leave, and contact with it the faculty of experience does steal. With experience

vanish all kinds of desire. And desire fails not attachment to take. Attachment to Karma deals a death blow. Karma falling, the wheel of birth no longer turns. When freedom from birth is secured, secured also is freedom from old age, disease and death, pain and weeping, suffering and care, despair and all the rest." In another place it is stated that whosoever born among men cares to know the characteristics of these twelve, ignorance (Avidya), actions (Samskaras), differentiating knowledge (Vijnana), name and form (Nama Rupa), six organs (Shadayatanas), contact with things (Sparsa), experience (Vedana), desire (Trshna), attachment (Upadana), aggregate of actions (Bhava), birth (Janma), and the fruits of actions (Karmapala), knows also the great Nirvana.* The ten sinful actions that should be avoided

* *Vide Manimukhalai*, Stanza 30, lines 51-103 and *the Siddhanta Dipika*, Vol. IV, p. 112.

in all religious practices by all kinds of practitioners irrespective of their stage of life (Grahasta or Sannyasi) are 'killing, stealing, and lusting, these three appertaining to the body; lying, tale bearing, using hot words, indulging in vain talk, these four to utterance belonging; desire, anger, and delusion, these three in the mind springing.' An examination into the old Buddhistic customs reveals to us that women also were permitted to become Sannyasins, and that in that stage of life they were known as Bhikshunis. From the *Manimekhalai* we learn that Matavi hearing of the sad death of Kovalan at Madura spends the remainder of her life in a Buddhist monastery. The heroine Manimekhalai herself finally settles at Kanchi to perform penance with a view to attain Nirvana.

Besides the Buddhist system of philosophy, there were in the Tamil land according to the *Manimekhalai* five

other systems of philosophy such as Lokayatam, Sankhyam, Naiyayikam, Vaiseshikam, and Mimamsakam, and the authors of these systems were Brihaspati, Kapila, Akshapatha, Kanada, and Jaimini respectively. In describing the doctrines of each of the above systems, the *Manimekhalai* does not give any account of the Nyaya; but in its place it mentions the Ajivaka and Nigranta philosophies which were evidently the representatives of the older Nyaya systems. The existence of these numerous schools shows the religious activity of the people in the Tamil land. Thus Saivism and Vaishnavism, and Buddhism and Jainism were all prevalent, and were allowed to prosper peacefully without persecution. There were the monasteries of the Jains and the Buddhists. Men with their wives and children used to go with flowers to the Buddhist churches during nights. Religious

toleration was a marked feature of the academic times in the Tamil country.

The religious liberty which the Tamils enjoyed had a great and salutary influence upon their intellectual and moral development. By softening feelings and manners, Buddhism powerfully contributed to the amelioration of the social state. The Nigrantas and Buddhists, holding up a high ideal of morality, exercised a profound influence upon moral and intellectual order and upon public ideas and sentiments. The pure conceptions of morality of the ancient Tamils, so well-embodied in their classical literature, constituted the real enduring basis of their civilization.

From the *Pattinappalai* we learn that a temple for worship was known as *Ambalam*. The most supreme deity worshipped by the Dravidians, it has already been stated, was known as *Kanthali*. *Kanthu* was the place where

the God was supposed to remain. It was also regarded as a symbol to represent God who is with shape and without shape. Nakkirar also testifies to the prevalence of this idea of God. The invisible, unthinkable Deity cannot be given forms as we like, and so a symbol called *Kanthu* was erected. The numerous references to the four Vedas, Vedic Brahmans and Sages, and Vedic sacrifices, the allusions to the worship of gods, the nature of the deities and objects of this life and of the life to come, described in these classical works, all go to prove that the Tamilians had greatly assimilated the Aryan system of religion in the third Sangam epoch.

Another point deserves to be noted. Some of the classical Tamil poems contain not merely references to theistic Gods such as Siva and Vishnu, but also to the four *Vyuhas*. The orthodox Hinduism, which had found a home in

the South, underwent a certain degree of modification 'towards subordinating the purely ritualistic part of the Brahmanic religion by a very strong infusion of the devotional element in it.' Since the Brahman was duly discharging his duties as a sacrificer to the community as a whole, people other than Brahmans were already looking forward 'to the attainment of earthly prosperity here in this world and salvation in the next by the comparatively easier method of devotion, each to the god of his heart.' 'The notion of a God and that of a ministering priest to stand between God and individual man already came into relief. This peculiar feature of devotion to God under the right guidance of a preceptor is a feature peculiar to *Bhakti*.

Thus the indigenous Dravidian religion, subjected to the mellowing influences of Buddhism, Jainism, and the vedic Religion, gave rise in due time

to the sweet, practical, and heart-enthralling culture of the Tamils, of which the Tamil classics, together with the soul-stirring Saiva and Vaishnava hymnology, not to mention the mighty and majestic God-aspiring temples of *Tamilakam*, constitute even to-day the imperishable monuments of beauty and glorious divine enthusiasm. 'In the study of the history of religion', according to Albrecht Weber, 'we are enabled to follow the different phases undergone by an idea from its first inception to its culminating point. That which is at the beginning is not only simple; it is also the better, the right, and the true. But in the course of its development foreign elements continue to make their influence felt till, when we reach our goal, we are frequently confronted with something altogether opposed to the propositions from which we started. Superstition has made itself master of the

situation, and like the fabled mermaid, we see a lovely maiden ending in an ugly fish.' But happily for South India, the religion of the Dravidians at the period we have now reached (*i. e.*) the early centuries of the Christian era was all the better for the absorption of the alien elements from the north, and already showing promise of a brilliant future, and the diverse seeds of many religions, sown on South Indian soil, were already germinating, and well on the way towards bearing rich and abundant fruit in the shape of the *Saiva Siddhanta* system of the next epoch.

References may here be made to a few sources which, besides the Tamil classics, throw a few welcome rays of light upon the political organisation of the Tamils in the historical period. The Kurumbars, it has already been stated elsewhere, were a pastoral tribe living in the region from the base of the table-land to

the Palar and Pennar rivers known as Tondamandalam. They were attacked by an army under Adondai or Tondaiman, the illegitimate son of Karikal Chola, and subjugated. This Tondaiman, under instructions from Karikal Chola, introduced civilization and political and social institutions suited to a civilized people in this once barbarous land. Fragmentary notices of their political and social organisation may be gathered from the essay of F. W. Ellis on land tenures and from traditionary statements preserved in the *McKenzie Collection of Mss.* They appear to have formed a sort of confederate state, under chiefs of their own, each of whom resided in a fortified stronghold, having a district of greater or less extent under its jurisdiction, denominated a *Kottam* (from *Kottai*, a fort or castle), the largest of which was recognised as the head of the union. Of the *kottams* there were twenty-four,

each consisting of one or more *nadus* and each *nadu* sub-divided into several *natthams* or townships. It is quite probable that this kind of organisation was the one introduced by Tondaiman. If this be so, this must have been the system in vogue in the Chola country. Tondaiman could not have newly evolved from his own brain the institutions he is stated to have set up in the land of the Palar, but only transplanted them from the Chola country to which he belonged. It does not do much violence to truth and historical accuracy, if we maintain that the institutions whose remains were noticed by Ellis and other scholars are the primitive polity of the Cholas in the early centuries of the Christian era.

The Tamil classics also confirm this testimony about the administrative divisions of the Tamil land. The unit of administration was the village or a group of villages. The villages in the

Tamil country were known as Pattinam or Pakkam, Ur, Sirur, Padi, Palli, Cheri, and Kuruchi. A certain geographical area containing a number of these units constituted a small division which in the Tondamandalam was dominated by a fort, while in the Chola country an important town or city dominated it. A number of these bigger units taken together constituted a district; a number of these districts in turn united to form a division giving us the regular gradation indicated in the Pallava and Chola copper-plates and inscriptions of a later period. Nadu was the biggest division, and pakkam, ur, cheri, or kurichi the smallest according to the divisions of the country into *neythal*, *marutham*, *mullai* or *kurunji* respectively. The big *nadus* called in later days *mandalam* were ruled by crowned monarchs (முடிவேந்தர்கள்). Under them were subordinate kings (குறுநில மன்னர்கள்) who

ruled over a *kurram*, comprising a number of townships and villages. There were also commanders of the army who were given a similar charge.

It is said that in the provinces and townships there were *Panchayats* consisting of old and respectable men of the various localities who helped the heads of provinces and townships in the administration of justice. 'The constitution of these popular assemblies was quite democratic. From what we know of the *Panchayat* during the days of the Pallava and the Chola ascendancy, between the eighth and the eleventh centuries A. D., we can infer that the members were elected by the people, and the assembly took cognizance of all matters of local importance, and settled every difference between one individual and another. *Puram* 266 gives us an idea of its great popularity and the confidence of the public in the integrity and the wisdom of

its members. Public opinion was very strong in these local bodies, and none dared to offend them by disobeying their orders.*

†We have references to the meetings of assemblies in the classical works. The poet Perungadungo says that the Kosars true to their plighted word appeared at the place of assembly suddenly with war drums beating and conch resounding. This place of assembly was underneath the shade of an old and ancient banyan tree with magnificent branches. In *Tamilakam*, the chief and ryots would frequently meet for purposes of common deliberation underneath the tall and shady banyan tree with its branches spread far and wide. In the *Tirumurugarruppadai*, there is a reference to the spreading tree under which vil-

* *The Christian College Magazine*, Quarterly *Series*, Vol IV, p. 168.

† *Vide Kurunthokai*, 15, Aham 251.

lage elders used to meet for transacting public business.

On the existing tribal and communal organisations, a central administration was superimposed. The Tamil classics like the *Kural* teach us the character of the central organisation* 'which welded the local organisations for local purposes into one unity which might be the state of those times. The local organisations were certainly of a democratic character, and rested for certain purposes on the communal basis. The devolution of power was complete. The central organisation had merely the control of local administration, the maintenance of peace and order in the country, and providing for defence against external enemies'.

The Word State

According to Valluvar, the constituent elements of a State are the minister,

* Vide *Some contributions of South India to Indian Culture*—Dr. S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar.

people, resources, allies, army, and fortresses. That is a great country which never fails in its yield of harvests, which is the abode of sages, which attracts men to itself by the greatness of its wealth, and which yields abundantly being free from pests, which is free from famines and plagues, and which is safe from the invasions of enemies. The country, which has known no devastation at the hands of its foes and which, even should it suffer any, would not bate one whit in its yield, will be called a jewel among the countries of the world. The waters of the surface, the waters that flow under-ground, rain water, well-situated mountains, strong fortifications, these are indispensable to every country. The nation, which is not divided into warring sects, which is free from murderous anarchists, and which has no traitors within its bosom to ruin it, is truly great.

Fortresses are helpful not only to the weak, who think only of their defence, but also to the strong and powerful. Water courses, deserts, mountains, thick jungles—all these constitute various kinds of defensive barriers. Height, thickness and impregnability, these are requisites that science demands of fortresses. That is the best fortress which is vulnerable in very few places, which is spacious and capable of breaking the assaults of those that attempt to take it, which affords facility of defence for the garrison, which is filled with stores of every kind, which is garrisoned by men that will make a brave defence, which cannot be reduced by a regular siege, by storm, or even by mining, which has been rendered impregnable by works of various kinds, and which enables the defenders to fell down their adversaries. The poet Mulamkilar of Aiyur, in referring to the different parts of a fortification, says, 'There was

first of all a moat so deep that it reached down to the abodes of demons; this was crowned with turrets, from which the archers shot forth their arrows; there was an impervious wood that surrounded small forts at every angle.'

THE CITY AND THE PALACE

The town of Madura is bedecked with sky-reaching mansions which everywhere appear like the beds of large rivers. The royal mansion is enclosed by high fortified walls. The ditches round the fort are deep with blue water. The ramparts of stone rise into the region of the Celestials. The ornamented gate with its massive doors appears like a huge tunnel cut through a mountain; the gate with doors ever smeared with ghee is broad and high enough to allow the passage of fully-caparisoned elephants along with triumphal banners. The gates of the fort are busy like the ceaselessly flowing river with throngs

of men who pass incessantly under it. To drive the darkness throughout night, metallic statues constructed by Yavanas bear lamps in their hands, and there are servants who carefully watch the lamps and pour oil into them as it is exhausted. Flags of various hues waving over the high mansions present the appearance of rainbows seen on mountain summits. The royal couch made of ivory is grand beyond description. It has a silk curtain whose borders are ornamented with hanging pearls; mattresses and cushions stuffed with the soft down of eider duck are laid upon the couch. The queen's ornamental mansion contains seven storeys. Madura resembles the celestial city; it is the fit city for salvation. Puhar, the capital of the Chola kingdom, was as usual in those days surrounded by a fort. The fort opened by a gate, and upon the massive doors of which the tiger-mark was worked, as it was the

ensign of the Chola, just as the fish-mark was that of the Pandya. The palace of Nannan, the chieftain of Konkan, lies close to the river, Seyar. A class of warriors maintain the military dignity of Nannan, and lances which brought the destruction of his foes rest inclinedly on the walls, and strike terror into the hearts of foreign visitors. There is a menagerie in front of his mansion, where the cubs of tigers and bears are confined in cages; several other animals such as the deer, the wild sheep, the guana, the mongoose, the peacock, the jungle-fowl, and the elephant find their respective places therein. There is also a botanical garden. The far-famed city of Puhar also had in its vicinity orchards, flower gardens, banks, and tanks. The royal menagerie at Madura contained several wild beasts such as tigers and bears. The town of Kanchi was encircled by brick

walls. The broad streets of Kanchi were full of deep grooves made by the wheels of the huge cars which plied often in them. There were also the quarters for soldiers whose military glory never grew dim. The bazaars were intensely busy. Festivals adored by all religionists were almost continuously held in the streets of the victorious city.

The Queen

The queen's bosom was ornamented by necklaces of gems. Her soft wrists were adorned by bracelets of gold. She was dressed in silk clothes with flower embroidery. Her feet used to be shampooed by attendant maids. 'Dwarfs, hunchbacks, and eunuchs, besides a number of noble maidens, waited upon the queen. On all public occasions the queen took her seat on the throne along with the king. She did not wear a crown unless she had inherited the monarchy in her own right.'

THE PRINCE

The education of royal youths was so adjusted as to fit them for their high and exalted station. They were given a Spartan training so far as their physical development was concerned. From boyhood, they were placed under expert tutors, and were trained in the use of arms, in riding on elephants and horses, and in driving chariots.

THE KING

The King should possess a strong and striking personality. A tall stature, long arms touching the knee, legs that have become stout and firm by driving elephants, ankles bearing the marks of anklets worn on them, the right hand turned inwards being accustomed to hold the arrows, and the left hand holding the bow, a broad chest—these constitute a few of the characteristics of a king of the Tamil land. Besides, the king wore on his body a

warrior dress (வீரவுடை), a special wreath (வீரமாலை), and a golden anklet (வீரக்கழல்). The king wore a long crown of a conical shape made of gold and set with precious stones. The kings sat on a royal chair of costly workmanship—a kind of mancha or cot (அரசுகட்டில்) made of ivory, gold, gems and surmounted with costly cushions—the whole raised on lions' heads carved on the four corners of it.

The king was served by the eight groups of attendants such as perfumers, garland-makers, betel-bearers, areca-nut servers, armourers, dressing valets, torch-bearers, and body guards. That the body-guards of the Indian princes and maid-servants of the royal household were mainly composed of Yavana youths and girls is all clearly indicated in the old Tamil classics. These Yavanas are described as strong-bodied soldiers guarding the king's room.

The king must have courage, liberality, wisdom, energy, alertness, learning, and decision. He should not fail in virtue, should not sin against the laws of valour, and should know how to develop the resources of his kingdom, how to enrich his treasury, and to preserve his wealth, and spend it worthily. The king shall devote himself assiduously to works that are commended by the wise. If he neglects them, he will suffer in all his future births. Though the glory of the king is a strong army, yet virtue is his chief strength. He must have strength like that of the sun, grace like that of the moon, and charity like that of the rain. He should guide his people and the affairs of state, as one guides a car on a proper road. Such are a few of the qualifications of a king. Parsimony, over-confidence, and excessive amour, these are the faults which a prince should avoid.

'The king's time was divided among his three main duties, (*viz.*,) the pursuit of wealth, of virtue, and of pleasure. The day was wholly spent in transacting the business of state, and the night was reserved for secret council meetings, and for the reception of spies, and secret embassies. Of the twelve hours of the day, the first four the king utilised in the pursuit of virtue. The king was awakened in the early hours of the morning by the blowing of conches.' For example, we are told Neduncheliyan got up early, and bathed and adorned his beautiful person with rich ornaments. Every morning a grand durbar was held in the audience hall, and the people of all classes found ready admission to it. He sent for soldiers, warriors, and generals who had done meritorious service on his behalf, and enlivened them with encouragement. 'The next four hours he spent with his wife, relations, and children

in the inner apartments of the palace. The four closing hours of the day were spent in looking after the revenue affairs, the collection of taxes and tribute, and the scrutiny of State charges in their various forms.'

The ideals that a king should place before himself are also described. He should give with grace, and rule with love. He must administer impartial justice, and consult the men of law. A king (or a judge) should mete out due justice without swerving ever so little in favour (or disfavour) of the rich or the poor; any divergence in the course of justice resembles a river of milk with a watercurrent in its course. * The king shall measure the guilt of the offender, and punish him so that he offendeth not again; but the punishment shall not be excessive. Those that desire that their power shall last, let

* *Palamoli*, Stanza 5.

them brandish their rod smartly, but lay it on soft. Men look up to the sceptre of the king for protection. His sceptre is the mainstay of the Brahmans and of righteousness. In the land of the king who wields the sceptre in accordance with the law, seasonal rains and rich harvests have their home. It is not the lance but the sceptre that brings victory to the king. His umbrella should protect the oppressed. The king, that guards his subjects from enemies both within and without, may punish his subjects when they go wrong. It is not a blemish but his duty. Punishing the wicked with death is like the removing of weeds from the cornfield.

The triumph of the king is the result of the produce of the soil raised from the sweat of the cultivator. When there is drought and dearth, and people become wicked, the world will blame the king.

Without listening to lying counsel, when cultivators are protected, and through them other people also, then will the king merit the praise of even his enemies. When the king grants his great love and peace to his people, his people feel for his safety as for themselves. He should be accessible to all his subjects, and be never harsh of word. He should have the virtue to bear with words that are bitter to the ear. The king, who is not easy of access, and who judges not causes with care, will fall from his place, and perish even when he has no enemy. In poem 35, *Purananuru*, the poet says addressing the king, 'Be easy of access at fitting time, as though the lord of justice sat to hear and decree right. Such kings have rain on their dominions at their will: kings get the blame whether rains fail or flow copiously, and lack the praise; such is the usage of the world.' The king is the life of the

people as will be seen from the following stanza:

> Foodstuff is not the life nor water;
> The king is the life of the world,
> Therefore to know he is the life,
> Is the duty of the king with a large army.
> (*Purananuru*, 186)

It is pleasing to note that these high ideals were completely realised. 'The Council of Uraiyur, impregnable city of the valiant Cholas, was famous as being the abode of equity.'* When Pandyan Neduncheliyan was told by pilgrims that some North Indian rulers insulted him and other Tamil princes, he is reported to have exclaimed, 'I shall defeat those rulers and make them carry stones; otherwise let me be known as the king who tyrannised over his subjects.' Thus oppression of the people by a monarch was considered most abominable in those

* Purananuru, verse 39.

days, and unworthy of the ancient Tamil rulers. The Tamil classics inculcated obedience and fervent loyalty to the king. Treachery to the king (*i. e.*) *raja-droham* was regarded as one of the worst sins a man could be guilty of. The prowess of the king in war, his immutable justice and accessibility, his protecting hand over the poor, and his liberality and piety are all set forth in the *Purananuru* and *Purapporulvenba-malai*. The usual way of calling the attention of the people to what was going on in the king's Court was by the beating of drums. The kings had three kinds of drums known as the war-drum, (*Viramurasam, வீரமுரசம்) the justice-drum, (Neethimurasam, நீதிமுரசம்) and the gift-drum (Kodaimurasam, கொடைமுரசம்). They were symbolical of the three great virtues of heroism, justice; and charity that distinguished

* *Vide Purananuru*, Verses 279 and 89.

every Tamil sovereign. When these drums were beaten, they would sound differently. Then the people knew for what they were sounded. The royal umbrella was regarded as symbolical of the protection given to the subjects by the king.

The king's position in the early centuries of the Christian era was hereditary. Sometimes it was elective. A prince who distinguished himself in war by feats of valour might be elected by the warriors as king. The king was the head of society. He was the supreme priest, the first to offer sacrifices, when seasons failed. He was the supreme commander. He exercised vast powers in matters of war and peace. He was also the supreme judge in civil and criminal cases. We have interesting details as regards the administration of justice in that remote age. There is a reference to the peculiar course Karikal Chola

adopted, when he delivered judgment in a dispute between two old men, who thought the king to be too young to sit in judgment over them. It is believed that Karikal, to outwit his clients, appeared as an old man, when judging their case. A thief arrested with stolen property was beheaded. A man caught in the act of adultery was killed. One who had trespassed into another's dwelling with the intention of committing adultery had his legs cut off. "Spying was visited with capital punishment. Sometimes the unfortunate victims to the king's wrath were trodden down by elephants. When innocent people were brought as suspects and given punishments, the poets interceded on their behalf, and saved them from the clutches of the law."* Justice was administered free of charge to suitors. There were special officers who performed

* *Vide Purananuru*, Stanzas 46 and 47.

the duties of judges. The presiding judge in each court wore a peculiar headgear, by which he was distinguished from other officers of the court.

Crimes were rare not merely because of the severe punishments, but also because of the precautions of the government. From *Maduraikkanchi*, we learn that, on the principle, 'set a thief to catch a thief,' the king appointed watchmen well-versed in all the arts of theft. Dexterity and fearlessness were their great virtues. They roamed quite fearlessly in the streets in spite of heavy rains and floods like tigers in search of prey. They peeped slyly into the rendezvous of crafty thieves and robbers. A very graphic description of an accomplished robber is given in the epic *Silappathikaram*. Theft should have risen to a fine art in those days. But for the appointment of guards who knew all the ins and outs of the

art of theft, the people's property should have been in great danger of being stolen. The complexion of the arch-thief was jet-black which merged with darkness, and made him quite invisible in the dark; he had a spade with which he could split rocks and planks; he had also got a sword to serve him in self-defence, if caught; his feet were protected by shoes probably to escape detection from foot-steps; he was clad in a soft cloth of jet-black hue; a rope made of cotton fibres with a clip at one end served him as a ladder to climb up any wall, and this was wound round his waist. His eyes rolled slyly in search of jewels and treasure; he was so dexterous that, when detected, he could hide himself within the twinkling of an eye. The guardsmen, who were a terror to the burglars, were noted for their undaunted courage and detective skill that had won for them the approbation of the wise.

Though the king was the repository of the executive and judicial powers, these powers were harmoniously combined in him. He carried out the law which had been formulated by the great men who had gone before him. His function was to administer, but not to make the law. The king was not an autocrat, but a constitutional ruler. The principal officers of the State, who assisted the king in his work of government, were the high priest, the chief astrologer, the ministers, and the commanders of the army.

The Minister

As the eyes of a king are his own ministers, he should use his discretion, and choose them wisely. The minister should be a man of affairs, clever, pure-minded, devoted to the king, and skilful in reading the hearts of men. The man, who is able to develop the resources of the kingdom, and cure the ills that may befall it, should be entrusted with

the management of the affairs of the State. The man, who is endowed with kindness, intelligence, decision, and who is free from greed, should be selected for service. Work should be entrusted to men in consideration of their expert knowledge and capacity for patient exertion, and not because of their love towards the person of the king. The prosperity of the king who will not take counsel with his councillors will wane.

Ambassadors

A kind heart, high birth, and manners that captivate kings—these are the qualifications of the ambassador. A loving nature, a wise understanding, and skill in speech, these three are indispensable to the envoy. Intelligence, learning, a commanding presence, conciseness of speech, sweetness of tongue, a careful eschewing of all disagreeable language, firmness of mind, purity of heart, engaging manners,

these are the other requisites of an envoy. He is the fittest ambassador who has a just eye for time and place, who knows his duty, and who weighs his words before uttering them. Even when threatened with death, the perfect ambassador will not fail in his duty, but will endeavour to secure his master's profit. The poetess Auvaiyar, the Tamilian Sapho, possessed these qualifications in a pre-eminent degree. She was gifted with high political wisdom, and in an important embassy to Tondaiman of Kanchi was sent by her patron, Athiyaman Neduman Anchi.

EVILS OF TYRANNY AND WEAK MONARCHY

The author of the *Kural* is aware of the dangers of incompetence on the part of the monarch. The sovereignty of the king, who does not oversee the administration every day, and remove the irregularities, will wear day by day. The evils of tyranny have not escaped the

penetrating eye of the immortal author of the *Kural*. The king, who oppresses his subjects, and does iniquity, is worse than an assassin. The thoughtless king, whose rule swerves from the ways of justice, will lose his kingdom and his substance. We know for instance, from the *Silappathikaram*, the tragic end of Pandyan Neduncheliyan, when he realised that he had unjustly put to death Kovalan. When the king committed suicide, he let fall these heart-rending and memorable words :—'No king am I who believed the words of my goldsmith. I am the thief. I have done an act which sullies the fair fame of the long line of kings who ruled the southern land. Better to die, than to bear this disgrace.' The tears of those groaning under oppression wear away the prosperity of the king. Unjust rule darkens the glory of the king. Repression of the rich, forgetfulness by the Brahman of

his science, failure of the heavens to send showers in their season, premature and abrupt close of the reign, these are the characteristics of tyranny. The government, as described above, seems at first sight to be an unmitigated and uncompromising autocracy. But in reality it is not the case; for a deeper and more detailed study will show that it is hedged in by diverse restrictions, all of them enforced by the community, which had an organisation to express its will. This organisation was embodied in the king's Council formed of the Five Great Assemblies called *Aimberungulu* (ஐம்பெருங்குழு). The five assemblies, according to an unknown commentator of the *Silappathikaram* (*Arumbathavurai-asiriyar*, அரும்பத உரையாசிரியர்), consisted of the representatives of the people (மாசனம், Majanam), priests (பார்ப்பார், par-par), physicians (மருத்தர், maruththar), astrologers or augurs (நிமித்தர்-Nimithar),

and ministers (அமைச்சர், Amaichchar). The assembly of representatives safeguarded the rights and privileges of the people; that of the priests directed religious ceremonies; that of the physicians attended to all matters affecting the health of the king and his subjects; that of astrologers fixed auspicious times for public ceremonies, and predicted important events. The assembly of the ministers attended to the collection and expenditure of the revenue and administration of justice. Separate places were assigned in the capital town for each of these assemblies for their meetings and transaction of business. But, according to *Adiyarkkunallar*, the celebrated commentator of the epic under reference, the assemblies consisted of ministers, priests, commanders (சேனாபதியர், Senapatis), ambassadors (தூதுவர், Thoothuvar), and spies (சாரணர், Charanar). In addition to the Five Great Assemblies, there was

another assembly called *Ennperayam* (எண்பேராயம்). According to Adiyarkkunallar, this body consisted of executive officers (காரணத்தியலவர், Karanaththiyalavar), priests (கருமவிதிகள், Karumavithikal), treasury officials (கனகச்சுற்றம், Kanakachchurram), palace guards (கடைகாப்பாளர், *Kadaikappalar*), great men of the city (நகரமாந்தர், *Nakaramanthar*), captains of troops (நனிபடைத்தலைவர், *Nanipadaithalaivar*), elephant-warriors (யானைவீரர், *Yanaivirar*), and cavalry officers (இவுளிமறவர், *Evulimaravar*).

According to *Purapporulvenbamalai*,* the members of the king's Council should possess the eight qualities, and should always look to success after duly weighing the chances of victory and defeat, and after debating justly the questions raised and the objections urged. The eight qualities of the councillors are stated to be good birth,

* *Vahaipadalam*, Chapter VIII, 19.

learning, good character, truthfulness, purity, and the ornament of even-mindedness without being envious and being covetous. These are ideal characteristics which, if possessed, would bring glory to the land.

According to Mr. R. C. Majumdar, the so-called five assemblies were really the five committees of a great assembly. It is interesting to note also that the ministers formed one of the assemblies. The assemblies taken together may justly be compared with the Privy Council, the assembly of the ministers corresponding with the Cabinet composed of a selected few.* The representative character of the assemblies and the effective control, which they exercised over the administration, are clearly established. On important occasions, the five assemblies attended the king's levee in the throne hall, or joined the royal procession.

* *Vide Corporate Life in Ancient India.*

The power of government was vested in the king and in the Five Great Assemblies. That these assemblies played not an inconsiderable part in the life of the Tamil States is proved by the references to them in the *Silappathikaram*. In connection with the celebration of the annual festival in honour of God Indra, the members of these assemblies were assigned the duty of bringing water in a golden vessel from the sacred Kaveri. Again, in *Arangerrukathai*,* the members of the Five Great Assemblies are said to have accompanied the royal procession. Again when Senguttuvan Chera sent his sword in advance before his own departure for the purpose of bringing a stone from the Himalayas, the assemblies are said to have blessed him †. These few references show that the assemblies were associated with him constantly,

* *Silappathikaram*, Lines 126-28.

† *Kalkotkathai*, Chap. 26, line 38.

and that they helped him in the government of the State. The royal administration was carried on not merely with the help of the assemblies, but also with the great officers of state. In a sense, the governmental organisation of the Tamil kingdoms may be said to resemble the system of government that prevailed in England in the Norman period.‡ Under the Tamil kings, the chief officers of the household, the priest (ஆசான், *Asan*), the great accountant (பெருங்கணி, *Perungani*), the Brahman Judges (அறக்களத் தந்தணர், *Arakkalathanthanar*), the Tax Collectors (காவிதி, *Kavithi*), and the Secretary of State (மந்திரக்கணக்கர், *Manthirakkanakkar*) acted in the administration along with the ministers. The commanders of the army formed also part of the organisation of the government. In another place these officers are

‡ *Silappathikaram*, Chap. 22, lines 6-11.

referred to as *Purohits (கரும வினைஞர்), Accountants (கணக்கியல் வினைஞர்), Judges (தரும வினைஞர்), and Commanders (தந்திர வினைஞர்). Perhaps it was one of the duties of these officers and the assemblies mentioned above to consider on the death of a king what had next to be done, the choice of a successor, even though the hereditary principle of succession to the throne was in operation among the Tamils, and to make the necessary arrangements for carrying on the administration during the interregnum. On another occasion, the Brahman judges, the priest, the great accountant along with the sculptors and architects were ordered to help in the consecration of a temple to Kannagi. Thus from the *Silappathikaram* as well as from other works of this period, it may be inferred that the assemblies had a recognised standing, and that they were amenable to public opinion.

* *Silappathikaram*, Chap. 26. *Kalkotkathai*, line 40, Chap. 28. *Nadukalkathai*, lines 222-224.

Influence of the Poets

Besides the constitutional checks explained above, there was an additional safeguard to the wayward actions of the king in the class of poets who were the sages and wise men of those days. They were a privileged class, and they tendered their good counsel without fear or favour, and the king dared not injure them, as their person was considered sacred. For example, Mangudi Maruthanar composed an exquisite idyll known as *Maduraikkanchi* with a view to impress upon the mind of the Pandyan Neduncheliyan the evanescence of all earthly splendour and the consequent necessity for obtaining a knowledge of the eternal bliss by the performance of holy sacrifices under the auspices and guidance of Brahman sages of antique celebrity. When an ancient Chola king by name Kopperun Cholan was reigning at Uraiyur, his sons unfurled the banner

of revolt against him. The irate father prepared to wage war against his own sons. Then a poet of his court appeased his wrath, and dissuaded him from an unnatural war with his sons by reasonable pleading. When the Chola king, Perunarkkilli, performed a *rajasuya* sacrifice, the Tamil kings, warrior chieftains, poets, bards, and minstrels flocked to his metropolis in honour of the occasion. The celebrated Auvaiyar who was present on the occasion availed herself of this golden opportunity to exhort the Tamil kings to be benevolent towards the poor. A poet by name Nariverunthalaiyar exhorted the Chera king to protect his subjects, just as persons would tend babies in their charge.

IRRIGATION

The ancient Tamil kings realised that the great remedy against famine was irrigation. Very extensive irrigation works were carried out by these rulers

who had at their disposal large treasures and an immense amount of forced labour. The embankment thrown on the Cauvery by Karikal Chola is an instance in point. A nation or society takes very long before it takes to the culture of the land which is an index of its settled state and a measure of its advanced civilization. In the agricultural stage, as J. S. Mill observes, 'the quantity of human food, which the earth is capable of returning even to the most wretched system of agriculture, so much exceeds what could be obtained in the purely pastoral stage that a great increase of population is invariably the result.' We most authentically learn of the ancient Tamils through their monumental work (*i. e.*) the *Kural*, which according to historical computation is at least 1,800 years old, that they were organised into a nation with its ideas materialised in the advantages of economic self-sufficiency in

clothing and food. According to this work, the ancient Tamils had actually solved the puzzle of food problem. Its talented author lays considerable stress on the supreme importance of agriculture to society. The literature, traditions, and customs of the Tamilians support the pre-eminent respectability of the calling of husbandry. To the ancient Tamilian, there was indeed nothing nobler than the yoke and the plough which were to him the true emblems of freedom, honour, and virtue. According to Valluvar, in spite of every hardship, husbandry was the chief industry. 'Husbandmen support all those that take to other work, not having the strength to plough. They alone live who live by tilling the ground.' All others eat only the bread of dependence. The Tamil kings thoroughly understood the importance of agriculture to this land. The writers of the age were also

keenly alive to the need for fostering agriculture. In 35, *Purananuru*, the poet exhorts the king to lighten the load of the tillers of the soil. An old lyric (No. 18, *Purananuru*) says:

> " . . . . . . Then Mighty ruler, listen to my song,
> Who give to frames of men the food
> They need, these give them life ;—
> For food sustains man's mortal frame;
> But food is earth with water blent:
> So those who join the water to the earth
> Build up the body, and supply its life.
> Men in less happy lands sow seed, and watch to skies for rain,
> But this can never supply the wants of kingdom and of king.
> Therefore, O Cheliyan, great in war, despise this not;
> *Increase the reservoirs for water made*
> Who bind the water, and supply to fields
> Their measured flow, these bind
> The earth to them. The fame of others passes swift away."

Public Works

Karikal, the Chola king, turned jungles into populous areas, dug many tanks,

and improved in various ways the material resources of his kingdom. He converted Uraiyur, which was before his time in a desolate condition, into a thriving city with an impregnable fortress. There were charity houses, wherein the poor and the needy were fed. Besides, there were charity houses for feeding stray cattle.

Land Revenue

The king collected as state revenue one sixth of the produce from the people. The Tamil princes were enjoined not to levy arbitrary taxation. There was a young prince called the learned Pandyan Nambi. He was disposed to be tyrannical. He was advised by the poet Pisiranthayar not to follow evil methods of rule in the following words :—

> "If an elephant take mouthfuls of ripe grain on
> it, the twentieth part of an acre will yield it
> food for many days,
> But if it enter a hundred fertile fields with no
> keeper,

Its foot will trample down much more than its mouth receives.
So if a wise king who knows the path of right take just his due,
His land will prosper yielding myriad fold.
But if a king not softened by his knowledge take just what he desires
Nor heed prescriptions rule, feasting with song and dance
Amid his court and kindred, and show no love to his subjects
Like the field that elephant entered
His kingdom will perish and he himself will lose his all."

Learning

The Tamil kings were munificent patrons of learning. But for this unprecedented munificence, the epoch of the Third Sangam would never have witnessed the remarkable outburst of literary and intellectual vitality which we have learnt to associate with 'the Augustan Age of Tamil Literature.' The favourite gifts of Ori, the chieftain of Kolli, a hill in Malabar, to the minstrels

who sought his help were caparisoned elephants. The chief gifts of Kari, the feudatory king of Maladu, were decked horses and lands. Kaudamanar, a poet, requested his patron, Palyanai Chelpuhal Kuttuvan to enable him to attain *Svargam* (the abode of the celestials). Thereupon, the astounded king conducted holy sacrifices in accordance with vedic rules, and the Brahman poet is stated to have realised his wish. As an example of the liberality of the Tamil kings, Nannan's treatment of the minstrels who resorted to his court may be cited. The dirty dress, in which the poverty-stricken bard was clad, was removed, and a rich apparel was given to him instead ; the bard could remain for any number of days in the court, and meet with the very same courteous treatment given him on the first day of his visit. He could return with the bounties, which Nannan bestowed

profusely like the clouds hovering over his hill. The *Pattinappalai* of Kadiyalur Rudirangannanar had a marvellous effect upon the mind of Karikal Chola who rewarded the poet with one million six hundred thousand *pons* (small gold coins) as recompense.* Tondaman Ilanthiraiyan of Kanchi was very affable to the bards, personally attended upon them during their dinner, and rewarded them with suitable gifts on the very day of their visit. In those days it was usual for a lord, who rewarded the poet who had sung on him, to follow him to a distance of seven steps, when the poet returned home recompensed by him. To the star of the first magnitude in the firmament of the Tamil literature of the epoch under review (*i.e.*) the poetess Auvaiyar was presented by Athiyaman Neduman Anchi, a rare black Nelli fruit (the black gooseberry) which had the

* *Vide Kalingattupparani*, Stanza 185.

virtue of conferring immortality upon the eater thereof. A poet by name Mosikiranar repaired to the Court of the Chera King Perumcheral Irumporai, and feeling tired, unconsciously fell asleep on the drum-couch in the palace. The king who was a great sympathiser was fanning the sleeping poet, till he got up trembling. The panic-stricken bard was soothed, and rewarded beyond his wildest dreams of avarice by the tender-hearted king. The foregoing account will conclusively show that learning was encouraged by the monarchs of those days, and it is no wonder that the Tamilian civilization had attained to an unheard of splendour during the early centuries of the Christian era.

The Army

Public defence was highly organised. Elephants, spears and swords, bows and arrows, cavalry, infantry, and chariots, all were utilised in war. The army of a

king should be well-organised and puissant. It should contain veterans who could hold out in desperate situations with grim determination regardless of decimating attacks. It should know no defeat, should be incapable of being corrupted, should have a long tradition of valour behind it, and should face valiantly even the God of Death, if He were to advance against it in all His fury. It should not be inferior in numbers to that of the enemy, should have no implacable jealousies, should not be left to starve without pay, and should be led by capable chiefs. Our ancients knew the different ways of fighting an enemy by siege and in the open battlefield. They employed spies. According to the teachings of the *Kural*, the power of the king, who has tact to convert enemies into allies, will last without end. If he has to contend alone and without allies against two enemies,

he must try to gain over one of them to his side. Valluvar says: "Form a wise plan, consolidate thy resources, provide for thy defences. If you do this, the pride of your enemies will soon be humbled to the dust. They shall not last long who humble not the pride of men who defy them. The king should take into consideration the output, the wastage, the profit that the undertaking will yield, and then put his hand to it. He must weigh justly the difficulty of the enterprise, his own strength, the strength of his enemy and the strength of his allies, and then he should enter upon it. To make war without planning every detail of it beforehand is only to transplant your enemy on carefully prepared soil. Bend down before your adversaries till the day of their decline; when that day arrives, you may easily throw them down."

Though the ancient Tamils were implacable in their rage, still no one

ventured into a war unless forced by sheer necessity and without deeply considering all the horrors of war. The *Purapporulvenbamalai* presents to us a picture of the political organisation of the ancient Dravidians similar in the main to that delineated by the *Tolkappiyam*. According to it, all their science of public or state affairs was summarised chiefly under the head of war which consisted of various branches. Cattle lifting was the beginning of warfare. The raid was followed by the rescue, and this by the organised invasion of the enemy's country, for which a particular wreath was assumed. This led to the systematic defence, and the defenders assumed a different wreath. The siege and protection of forts, each demanded its appropriate garland. Then came war in general, and for that another wreath was borne. Finally the victors who had gained supremacy had another

wreath which they wore as the proud token of victory. This work relates to the expeditions in which these eight different chaplets were worn by the combatants according to the character of those undertakings and the feelings of those engaged in them. These garlands were intended to strike awe into the minds of the opposing hosts, and to some extent supplied the place of military uniforms.

Laws of War

The rules of warfare may then be briefly touched upon. The capture of the enemy's cattle was carried out with a view to remove the useful and the sacred animals from the scene of war. The invader was equally humane to the aged, the infirm, the childless, the women, and the Brahmans. The Tamils usually gave instructions to their soldiers thus: 'Touch not the temples where sacrifices are offered; spare the dwellings of the

holy ascetics; enter not the houses of the sacred vedic Brahmans.' From stanza 9 of the *Purananuru* we learn something of the humane rules of warfare observed among the ancient Tamils. The Pandyan king, Palyagasalai Mudukudumipperuvaluthi, was about to commence a battle. He advanced with his forces to surprise the owners of the cattle. Before these had time to muster, he uttered the words of warning. The fight would begin, as soon as the warriors assembled for defence; meanwhile he was anxious that there should be no unnecessary bloodshed, either of cattle or of non-combatants. The words of warning which he uttered were as follows:—'Ye cows; ye Brahmans of like sanctity; ye women; ye who are suffering from disease; ye who have not obtained sons of priceless value, whose sacred duty it is to care for those who dwell in the Southern Regions, performing on their

behalf the sacred rites, we are going to shoot out our swift arrows; therefore, hasten ye to your sheltering fortresses.' In another place, the same king is said to have subdued his various enemies by his true heroism in battles without any foul play or strategem. It is touching to note that the king's sympathy towards his wounded soldiers was unbounded. Thanks to the *Nedunalvadai* we get a picture of Pandyan Neduncheliyan in encampment at midnight. The king is not confining himself within his tent. He is busy in paying encouraging visits to his wounded soldiers, who fought gloriously for him by cutting down to the ground the ornamented trunks of his enemies' tuskers. The blaze of the torch held near him burns horizontally. The royal umbrella protects him from the arrowy spray of the northern wind. The night garment loosening from his shoulders

is held by his left arm, while his right hand rests on the shoulder of his aid-de-camp bearing the royal sword. In this manner, led by the field-marshal, he goes from tent to tent encouraging the wounded by his beaming countenance and sweet words.

But the ancients were merciless to the vanquished. For example, when Karikala invaded foreign territories, he reduced them to desolate regions. Fertile fields and gardens of his foes were turned into wastes overgrown with weeds. The magnificent halls of his enemies became the resort of the ill-omened owls and ghosts of either sex. The massive pillars in these halls became the posts for tying his rut elephants. The spacious kitchens of his foes became the rendezvous of robbers who distributed their booty among themselves, while the wild owls shrieked over their heads. The war usually ended with the death of

the king and the overthrow of his kingdom. The inhabitants of the invaded country would flee on every side. The country would be ravaged with fire. 'The beautiful homes with pictured halls are levelled with the dust. Asses are yoked to plough up the soil with spears; while worthless plants are sown on the foundations.'* Thus rages the conquering king. The conqueror is solemnly wedded to the newly acquired country; neighbouring kings bring tribute; and universal submission follows.

Such was the system of Government followed in the three great Pandya, Chera and Chola Kingdoms during the early centuries of the Christian era. May we not hope that the Dravidian genius will, as in the past, so in the future, rise equal to the occasion, and solve the many complicated social and

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* *Purrapporul venba malai*, verse 120.

political problems which may hereafter press for solution, in a manner not wholly unworthy of its splendid and ennobling record?

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